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OPTAR POR LA PEDAGOGÍA DE SUMMERHILL

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**Área de Conocimiento: Teoría e Historia de la
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ANEXO I: Diversos informes de los inspectores de educación del gobierno Británico sobre Summerhill School (de los años: 1949, 1999, 2005, 2007, 2011, 2012 y 2016).

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Y, por último, al personal de la Biblioteca de la UJI por su amabilidad y profesionalidad.

¹ JLC son las siglas que pertenecen a un padre que decidió enviar a sus hijos a Summerhill School, aunque diversos problemas se lo impidieron.

RESUMEN

El presente TFG muestra los motivos de un padre que opta por una pedagogía no autoritaria, como es la Summerhill School², en Inglaterra, para la educación de sus dos hijos. Se ha llevado a cabo esta historia de vida, que se enmarca en la denominada "investigación cualitativa". Como instrumento de trabajo de campo para la obtención de la información necesaria para este estudio, se ha utilizado la entrevista biográfico-narrativa.

El análisis de los resultados trata de mostrar que su toma de decisión de esta opción, por parte de este progenitor, responde al sentido vivencial que desarrolla en la década de los setenta, a su pensamiento y a su filosofía de vida, todos ellos muy cercanos al ideario pedagógico de Summerhill. Las historias de vida de este tipo ayudan a comprender las decisiones que llevan a la elección de determinadas pedagogías.

PALABRAS CLAVE

Pedagogía no autoritaria, Summerhill, Neill, historia de vida.

ABSTRACT

The present TFG shows the motives of a father who chooses a non-authoritarian pedagogy, such as the Summerhill School in England, for the education of his two children. It is a life history that is part of the so-called "qualitative research", through the biographical-narrative interview, as a tool of field work to obtain the necessary information for this study.

The analysis of the results tries to show that the decision making of this option, on the part of this parent, responds to the experiential sense that develops in the seventies, to his thought and to his way of seeing life, all of them very close to the pedagogical ideology of Summerhill. Life histories of this type help to understand the decisions that lead to the choice of certain pedagogies.

KEYWORDS

Non-authoritarian pedagogy, Summerhill, Neill, life history.

² Summerhill School, es una escuela que se autodenomina "democrática", ubicada en Leiston, Inglaterra. Fue fundada por A. S. Neill en 1921. Alexander Sutherland Neill (1883-1973) fue un pedagogo escocés que implantó un tipo de pedagogía no autoritaria, y que, aunque con deudas teóricas reconocidas, como la del psicólogo Wilhelm Reich o el pedagogo Homer Lane, debe mucho a su propia experiencia pedagógica tolerante y muy respetuosa con los niños.

1. JUSTIFICACIÓN

Esta investigación tiene sus orígenes en una conversación con JLC, hace apenas unos años, siendo yo ya estudiante de Magisterio de Primaria de la UJI. Entonces JLC me expresó por primera vez que había tenido la voluntad de llevar a sus dos hijos a Summerhill, y que había visto frustrado su intento. Aquella confesión y su conocimiento de esta pedagogía, me sorprendieron mucho. Ello se debió a que lo que yo conocía de la pedagogía de Neill no era mucho y, además, no esperaba encontrar a alguien fuera del ámbito pedagógico que conociese la escuela de Summerhill y los escritos de Neill, y, más aún, que éstos tuvieran una influencia real en su vida.

No es frecuente encontrar muchas personas en nuestro país que tuvieran o tengan incluso actualmente esas características, conocimiento y deseo de que sus hijos se eduquen con la pedagogía de Neill. Esto otorga a este caso una singularidad y un interés real, a mi modo de ver, para el estudio de la historia de la educación.

2. ESTADO DE LA CUESTIÓN

2.1. Investigación.

En el *Diccionario Unesco de ciencias sociales* (UNESCO, 1987), el término “investigación” viene definido del siguiente modo: “El término hace referencia, dentro del marco de la actividad científica, al proceso inquisitorio de fenómenos con el propósito de comprenderlos y explicarlos”. Es pues, “un proceso por el cual se enfrentan y se resuelven problemas en forma planificada, y con una determinada finalidad” (Cazau, 1991). Por lo tanto, está orientada a la obtención de nuevos conocimientos y su aplicación para la solución a problemas o interrogantes. Y particularmente, la investigación en ciencias sociales podría definirse como un proceso de generación de conocimiento referido a la realidad social y el comportamiento humano.

Existen diferentes tipos de investigación, pero “todas son, o tienden a ser, una manera planificada, cautelosa, sistemática y confiable de descubrir o profundizar el conocimiento” (Blaxter, Hugues y Tight, 2000).

Dentro de la investigación encontramos dos grandes modalidades: la investigación cuantitativa y la cualitativa. La investigación cuantitativa es una estrategia orientada por las variables (Ragin, 1999), es decir que las características o factores que definen la complejidad de la realidad social son traducibles numéricamente, lo que permite operar matemáticamente o, incluso, implementar modelos estadísticos significativos de correlación o explicación causal. En otras palabras, la investigación cuantitativa genera datos numéricos o informaciones que pueden ser convertidas en cifras. Por el contrario, y siguiendo a Dumez (2013), la investigación cualitativa analiza a los actores cómo actúan. Se apoya en lo que ellos dicen, sus intenciones, los distintos modos de actuar y sus interacciones. “Mientras que la investigación cualitativa parte de una posición fenomenológica, la cuantitativa se basa en una postura positivista” (Maykut y Morehouse, 1999).

2.2. Investigación cualitativa.

Conviene hacer una distinción entre el estudio de los fenómenos humanos y sociales y el de los fenómenos naturales, y mientras que estos últimos se basan en la explicación, mediante la búsqueda de leyes universales, los primeros requieren en cambio una comprensión, dado el sentido que los individuos o grupos dan a sus acciones en un contexto particular, es decir existe intencionalidad tanto en su pensamiento como en su acción. En otras palabras, la investigación en ciencias sociales es diferente a la de las ciencias naturales, porque su objeto es diferente. Este es particular, y esa particularidad radica en que los individuos o grupos hablan, piensan y actúan intencionadamente en un contexto o en una situación.

Hay que tener presente que la cualidad es lo que hace que algo sea lo que es, y lo diferencia del resto, mientras que la cantidad hace referencia al número de cosas en cuestión. La investigación cualitativa no se opone a la investigación cuantitativa. Las dos exigen unas competencias diferentes por parte del investigador, pero pueden enriquecerse mutuamente. No obstante, en la investigación cualitativa, las informaciones que se manejan no son cuantificables, se usa un lenguaje discursivo y argumentativo y el método utilizado es dialógico. De ella, se obtiene un conocimiento en profundidad, denso y en detalle. Los métodos cualitativos “ponen el énfasis en la ‘visión’ de los actores y el análisis contextual en el que ésta se desarrolla, centrándose en el significado de las relaciones sociales” (Vela, 2004).

La investigación cualitativa analiza preferentemente informaciones no numéricas (ideas, creencias, percepciones, posturas, acciones, palabras...) con el objetivo de explorar y comprender fenómenos humanos complejos, de comprender los comportamientos complejos de los actores sociales. Es un enfoque de investigación de sentido, ya que parte del sentido que dan los actores sociales a su vida y a sus actos, en los que el narrador se reconoce como el actor de su propia historia, y que la investigación cualitativa pretende comprender. Insistir, pues, en que se basa en el estudio de los individuos o grupos a partir de lo que dicen y hacen en un contexto determinado. Su objetivo es comprender la experiencia vivida desde el punto de vista de las personas que la viven. “La investigación cualitativa implica un enfoque interpretativo y naturalista del mundo, lo cual significa que los investigadores cualitativos estudian las cosas en sus escenarios naturales, tratando de entender o interpretar los fenómenos en función de los significados que las personas les dan” (Denzin, 2012). De lo dicho, se comprende que esta investigación se denomine también investigación comprensiva.

Por otra parte, y de acuerdo con Paillé (2001), podemos caracterizar la investigación cualitativa como:

[...] toda investigación empírica en ciencias humanas y sociales que responde a las cinco características siguientes: 1) la investigación es concebida en gran parte desde una óptica comprensiva, 2) aborda el objeto de estudio de manera amplia y abierta, 3) incluye una recogida de datos efectuada mediante métodos cualitativos..., 4) da lugar a un análisis cualitativo de los datos en el que las palabras son analizadas directamente por otras palabras, sin pasar por una operación numérica, y 5) desemboca en un relato o una especie de teoría (y no en una demostración).

Al decantarse por la comprensión, en vez de la explicación, se hace imprescindible la capacidad intuitiva y la empatía de la persona investigadora. Asimismo, exige síntesis progresivas. “Requiere, pues, un grado de integración dialógica tanto práctica como interpretativa entre la persona investigadora y la persona investigada, así como sensibilidad para sintetizar y captar coherencias y

contradicciones” (Verd y Lozares, 2016). De hecho, se recoge la información, observada o discursiva, en el momento de la entrevista, y se analiza e interpreta de modo a veces recurrente y que se retroalimenta de modo circular. Se da un diálogo entre el planteamiento teórico inicial y los fenómenos a estudiar.

La investigación cualitativa es realmente pertinente para los estudios biográficos, como fenómenos de sentido, es decir con una particularidad singular, y de temporalidad, o contextualizada. Se revela, pues, como evidente que la opción se decante por la investigación cualitativa para este estudio. Se ha optado por la estrategia metodológica en que la teoría y la información empírica se relacionan, retroalimentándose mutuamente.

2.2. Investigación biográfico-narrativa.

Dentro de la investigación cualitativa se encuentra la investigación biográfico-narrativa. “Narrar la historia de una vida es una autointerpretación de lo que somos, una puesta en escena a través de la narración” (Moriña, 2016). Sin embargo, hay que establecer y diferenciar los conceptos básicos de biografía y autobiografía:

“La diferencia principal entre ambos términos es que mientras el segundo constituye la narración de la propia vida, contada por su propio protagonista, el primero consiste en una elaboración externa al protagonista, normalmente narrada en tercera persona, ya sea sobre una base exclusivamente documental, ya sea mediante una combinación de documentación, entrevistas al biografiado y a otras personas de su entorno” (Pujadas, 1992).

La complejidad y particularidad de la realidad humana y social requieren para su investigación unas herramientas metodológicas adecuadas que den cuenta de éstas. Las técnicas de recogida de datos son seis (Moriña, 2017): entrevistas biográficas o en profundidad, entrevistas a otros informantes, auto-informes, un día en la vida de..., la línea de vida y la técnica de la foto. La analizada aquí es la biográfica. La fuente principal de información es la persona investigada y, por tanto, lo que se requiere es que el investigador sepa escuchar, observar y comprender la información proporcionada por aquella. Se está entonces ante dos conceptos, la identidad y la memoria.

La investigación biográfico-narrativa tiene como objeto el estudio de un fenómeno vivencial, un relato autobiográfico, en este caso de tipo oral, y como método, la entrevista, entre otros muchos que existen, a través de la cual recabamos la información: se utiliza la entrevista como estrategia metodológica.

2.3. Entrevista.

Una entrevista cualitativa es “una interlocución basada en la lógica de pregunta-respuesta o estímulo-respuesta que tiene como objetivo la obtención de información de carácter cualitativo” (Verd y Lozares, 2016). Como técnica de recogida de datos se diferencia de la encuesta, en que ésta última es una técnica cuantitativa.

Existen diversos tipos de entrevistas (Verd y Lozares, 2016) dependiendo de diversos factores; a) según el grado de estructuración, una entrevista puede ser dirigida o estructurada, semidirigida o semiestructurada, o bien no dirigida o no estructurada, denominada a veces abierta o en profundidad; b) según el contenido, puede ser temática o genérica; c) según el grado de simultaneidad, las entrevistas pueden ser simultáneas en el tiempo, pero no en el espacio o sin simultaneidad ni en el tiempo ni el espacio; d) según la finalidad, si tienen como objetivo explorar o bien, conocer, explicar, comprender; y e) según el número de personas, las entrevistas pueden ser individuales o grupales.

La entrevista biográfica es una relación dialógica entre entrevistado y entrevistador, supone un tipo de conversación, aun cuando no lo es, en la que ambos trabajan juntos para producir la narrativa; es decir “un diálogo abierto con pocas pautas, en la que la función básica del entrevistador es estimular al sujeto analizado para que proporcione respuestas claras, cronológicamente precisas, en las se expliciten de la forma más amplia posible las referencias a terceras personas, o ambientes y lugares concretos en los que transcurren los distintos episodios biográficos” (Pujadas, 1999). De una relación social dialógica como ésta, pues es realmente una interacción social en la que existe una asimetría entre entrevistador y entrevistado: nivel educativo, edad, género, etc., extraemos vivencias, opiniones, inquietudes personales que nos sirven para comprender el sentido que una persona da a su vida o a un fragmento de ella. Pues la entrevista biográfica afecta a lo que sucedió (a cómo la vida fue vivida), a cómo se experimentó y a la narración misma que se hace de esta experiencia. “La entrevistado es un narrador, el narrador de la historia contada, mientras que el entrevistador es un guía, o director, en este proceso. Los dos colaboran conjuntamente, componiendo y construyendo una historia con la que el narrador pueda estar conforme” (Atkinson, 1998). No es, por tanto, una conversación normal a la que estamos acostumbrados, en la que los individuos intercambian sus opiniones sobre uno o varios temas, ya que el entrevistado es, prácticamente, el único que habla, y habla sobre él. Toda entrevista no es un intercambio espontáneo, no es una simple conversación, es una situación “artificial”, formal (Verd y Lozares, 2016).

En el proceso de la entrevista se requiere entonces que el entrevistador intervenga lo menos posible, ya que en ese caso podría imponer su propio punto de vista. Debe, asimismo, estar atento a las posibles digresiones, que diluirían el relato, y a los silencios o pausas con aclaraciones o puntualizaciones, que permitan que tenga una continuidad (Pujadas, 1999). El entrevistador sin embargo se limita a realizar preguntas apropiadas, a estimular al entrevistado.

En un primer momento, la persona entrevistada nos da su versión sobre la cuestión planteada. Así pues, está basada en su interpretación y vivencia, es la llamada construcción de primer orden. A continuación, se pasa a interpretar esta información en el marco de la teoría utilizada, y la que va apareciendo al analizar los datos, es la llamada construcción de segundo orden: tras la observación de campo, la interpretación (Flick, 2009). En ésta, el tiempo histórico nos puede servir como construcción objetiva con la que contrastar y entrecruzar la historia subjetiva. La entrevista es un fenómeno interactivo y reflexivo.

Las pautas generales de la entrevista se le presentan previamente al entrevistado, tanto para que conozca el planteamiento y el eje temático de la entrevista, pactados previamente, como para que dé su consentimiento (Stake, 1998, Moriña, 2017).

2.4. Historia de vida.

La historia de vida se puede definir como la historia que una persona decide contarnos respecto a su vida, lo que el narrador quiere que los demás sepamos de ella, tal y como la recuerda, lo más honestamente posible y como resultado de una entrevista (Atkinson 1998). Por lo que aquello que se cuenta es necesariamente selectivo y en torno a temas que para el narrador son relevantes.

Se considera, pues, que es “una estrategia de investigación biográfico-narrativa que se enmarca dentro del ámbito cualitativo.” (Serret, Martí y Corbatón, 2016). Con ella se busca construir un sentido vivencial de una persona.

Existen diversos tipos de investigación biográfica-narrativa: tradición documental, historia oral, biografías, historia de vida, etc., pero conviene diferenciar, debido a su posible confusión, entre lo que los anglosajones denominan con el término *life history* (historias de vida) y *life story* (relatos de vida), dada su estrecha vinculación. “Parece que en relación a su traducción lo más adecuado es referirnos a una historia de vida cuando hacemos referencia a *life history*, y a un relato de vida cuando queremos referirnos a *life story*” (Moriña, 2017). Según Pujadas (2002), el término *life story* se refiere exclusivamente a la narración biográfica que una persona hace. Y *life history* “es el relato de esa vida, [...] pero incluye cualquier otro tipo de información adicional que permita la reconstrucción de esa vida” (Moriña, 2017).

Los tipos de historias de vida pueden ser, o bien de relato único, o bien de relatos múltiples, y dentro de estos últimos de relatos cruzados y de relatos paralelos (Pujadas, 1999). El que atañe a esta investigación es de relato único.

Así, pues, para Pujadas (1998) una historia de vida hace referencia a un:

[...] relato autobiográfico, obtenido por el investigador mediante entrevistas sucesivas [en este caso una], en las que el objetivo es mostrar el testimonio subjetivo de una persona en la que se recojan tanto los acontecimientos como las valoraciones que dicha persona hace de su propia existencia.

Demazzière (2011) matiza que:

La producción del relato funciona por selección de acontecimientos y de episodios, porque el tiempo se está agotando y porque no se puede decir todo o porque la consigna de salida invita a ello y permite esta selección ("lo que es importante para ti"). Pero también, y sobre todo, porque narrar es arreglar, acomodar, organizar partes de su vida para darle a ésta una forma, para ordenarla, para atribuirle un sentido.

Este tipo de investigación se presenta como una investigación esencial para entender la vida de las personas, y, concretamente, para entender la vida de los individuos en relación con los otros. Aquí se prima lo subjetivo, su singularidad, frente a lo objetivo, y, junto a la reflexión y a la búsqueda de sentido vivencial, se restablece también todo el contenido emocional que otros tipos de investigación niegan, como, por ejemplo, los informes. Es un acto que permite que el otro tome la palabra y hable de sí mismo.

3. METODOLOGÍA

Aun cuando hay autores que opinan que el “diseño metodológico del estudio es secundario” (Kazez, 2009), mi propia experiencia me ha demostrado que, si ello es cierto, no por ello hay que descuidarlo.

En primer lugar, se me planteó la cuestión de si la persona elegida tenía la singularidad y la relevancia suficiente para llevar a cabo esta investigación. Una vez decidido que sí la tenía, había que plantearse cómo llevarla a cabo. Se presentaba como necesario estudiar previamente todos los aspectos teóricos y prácticos sobre el tipo de investigación de que se trataba: una investigación cualitativa, una historia de vida y, para recabar la información del entrevistado, una entrevista no directiva.

Una vez seleccionada la bibliografía, había que explicar con la mayor claridad posible la estructura y desarrollo de la investigación. Paralelamente, necesitaba un conocimiento realmente satisfactorio de la pedagogía que se ha llevado y se lleva aún en Summerhill, y una lectura suficiente de los libros de Neill, aunque no sé muy bien cuándo es ya suficiente.

Debía averiguar por qué una pedagogía como ésta ha podido tener, y aún tiene, tanta influencia en la pedagogía de todo el mundo. A la vez que debía averiguar por qué influyó tanto en JLC, como para querer llevar a sus hijos a esa escuela y también qué idea tenía de esa pedagogía, cómo la interpretaba.

El modelo de entrevista elegido es la entrevista no directiva, pues la finalidad es producir un relato o de ese fragmento de su vida y de su concepción pedagógica. Sin embargo, se trata no tanto de que el centro de la entrevista sea la reflexión, como el relato de vida del entrevistado, la narración de ese fragmento de su vida. Se parte de un mínimo marco conceptual predeterminado. Se ha utilizado el método de entrevista no estructurada, completamente abierta, libre o en profundidad. Y, además, hemos querido mantener un equilibrio entre el aspecto analítico-interpretativo y el testimonial.

La investigación de la historia de vida llevada a cabo aquí busca comprender por qué, cuándo y qué decidió a JLC por una pedagogía tan minoritaria y lejana de nuestra experiencia como es la pedagogía de Summerhill. Tuve en cuenta que se requiere por parte del entrevistador que las preguntas sean pertinentes y sugerentes para recabar una buena información, saber escuchar y realizar un buen análisis de los resultados obtenidos (Blaxter et al., 2000).

La entrevista se gravó en videocámara y fue transcrita. En la entrevista transcrita se ha intentado recoger lo más fielmente posible lo que el entrevistado quiere decir, junto a aspectos situacionales, como silencios, gestos, etc., más que sus palabras exactas; es decir, hacerla lo más legible posible (Moriña, 2017). Además, se le ha presentado la transcripción al entrevistado para que éste pueda cotejar la exactitud de su pensamiento, y para mejorar el estilo (Stake, 1998, Moriña, 2017).

En el anexo I he creído pertinente adjuntar diversos informes de inspectores de educación del gobierno británico. Con la finalidad de que se pueda contrastar el análisis que he hecho de la pedagogía de Summerhill con la que hacen profesionales exteriores sobre esta escuela.

El análisis de datos se ha realizado de un modo *emic*, descripciones desde dentro (en primera persona, subjetivista, fenomenológica) en vez de descripciones desde fuera (en tercera persona, objetivista), *etic* (Moriña, 2017), y desde una mirada temática y subjetiva.

4. RESULTADOS

JLC, proviene de un estrato social bajo y, por tanto, de un medio familiar con unos recursos económicos escasos y un nivel cultural escaso o nulo. Sus estudios, incluso los superiores, los realizó con ayuda de becas. En 1973 entra en la universidad, una universidad con *numerus clausus*, un “cupo” limitado de estudiantes, y muy pocos alumnos de las clases pobres. Participa en las luchas contra la Dictadura, y tras dos años la abandona y se pone a trabajar en varios trabajos sin cualificación profesional. Años después, al quedar en paro, vuelve a retomar los estudios para, finalmente, terminarlos. Su nivel cultural e intelectual se debe sobre todo a su propia iniciativa personal.

En los primeros años de los setenta entré en la Universidad de Valencia, y por tanto, soy del plan del setenta y tres. (JLC, p.1, l.1-2) [...] la gente estábamos luchando por unas libertades que necesitábamos, que las sentíamos como vitales para nuestras vidas. (JLC, p.1, l.15-16)

La economía de los países occidentales de los años de la postguerra mostró un rápido desarrollo y una fuerte reindustrialización, en un paisaje desolador de muerte, destrucción y sufrimiento, y ello tuvo sus consecuencias también en la educación de esos países. En 1968, Mark Blaug (1972) consideraba la educación en términos de inversión económica en “recursos humanos”, en capital humano, lo que exigía un aprendizaje programado y cuantificable y un encuadramiento en diferentes tipos de enseñanzas, cuyo objetivo era proporcionar mano de obra cualificada para una economía en desarrollo y unos cuadros políticos e ideológicos para una sociedad moderna, dentro de una ideología que se ha llamado “desarrollismo”. Como parece, cualquier sociedad busca, también y especialmente a través de la educación, reproducirse a sí misma. Y esta concepción y su práctica, a pesar de las diferentes políticas educativas llevadas a cabo desde posiciones ideológicas diversas, fueron adoptadas por los organismos nacionales e internacionales, y siguen aún vigentes. Como aún sigue vigente, aunque muchas veces ello no sea admitido abiertamente, la influencia de Skinner sobre los psicólogos de la educación y, en particular y más ampliamente de lo que estamos dispuestos a reconocer, sobre la práctica pedagógica diaria.

Es una época de cambio y de construcción de la sociedad que estamos viviendo actualmente: neoliberal, consumista y desarrollista, si se quiere. (JLC, p.1, l.2-4)

El Mayo del 68 en Francia se inició con una ola de protestas estudiantiles en las principales ciudades de ese país. Pronto se contagió a la clase obrera, en un movimiento de ocupaciones de fábricas y centros de enseñanza y universidades, respectivamente. Y desde Francia se extendería a las principales ciudades del mundo industrializado. Entre las causas más visibles estaba el patente desequilibrio social y económico que una riqueza de mercancías producidas por el enorme desarrollo industrial tras la Segunda Guerra Mundial se había acaparado en unas pocas manos. A las condiciones propias de cada país, como en Francia la guerra en Indochina o Argelia entre otras, se añadió el inicio de una gran crisis que afectaría a una gran parte del planeta, a su parte más rica. Se cuestionaron desde los sindicatos a los partidos políticos, Universidad, el Arte, etc. El pensamiento establecido, las ideologías, ni daban explicaciones de las nuevas condiciones de vida, ni servían ya para justificarlas.

En los años setenta, como si fuese una onda expansiva, llegó aquí, quizá con unos años de retraso, (yo no creo que sea de retraso, sino, simplemente, de efectos de una onda) la crítica radical-social que se producía en todo el Occidente. No sólo en Francia, el año del 68, se producía también en Berkeley, se producía en Berlín, y en muchos otros sitios.

Es decir, se habla del Mayo del 68 como si hubiese sido el único fenómeno eclosivo que se producía. No, se producía por toda Europa, Norte América, incluso, Japón. (JLC, p.1, l.5-10)

De esta época en España ya se puede hablar de “Revolución Industrial de los sesenta”, término de Pierre Vilar, y de agricultura capitalista. Se alteran profundamente las estructuras sociales, consolidándose una muy amplia clase media, un modo de vida urbano y consumista (TV, coche particular, vacaciones...), exigencias de derechos sociales y políticos, diferentes concepciones de la familia, etc.; asimismo fuertes movimientos migratorios interiores, y, sobretudo, un éxodo rural hacia las grandes ciudades. Pero, además, ni la censura de prensa ni el control de los *mass media* puede ya impedir que lo que sucede en el mundo llegue a los ciudadanos (Maluquer, 2014). Todo ello propiciará y exigirá un modelo de educación tecnocrático, o bien “modo de educación tecnocrático de masas”, según la terminología de Cuesta (2005), frente a uno hasta entonces más ideologizado –político y, sobretudo, religioso-, y la tradicional política educativa basada en la subsidiariedad se va abandonando por otra más intervencionista (Fernández, 2002). La dictadura se reforma en Estado democrático. En estos años, la izquierda, desde perspectivas diferentes, se dirigirá en particular a la defensa de una educación pública más que estatal. La Constitución de 1978, tras el consenso de las diferentes posiciones políticas, recogerá en el artículo 27 esa ambivalencia de escuela pública/privada, que aún experimentamos hoy en día, pero también el derecho de todos a la educación, la llamada “igualdad de oportunidades”.

Aquí lo que ocurre, es que estábamos en una época, en los últimos años, en la agonía de una dictadura fascista, pero que estaba ya agonizando, o se estaba ya transformando, o travistiendo mejor, en una democracia. Porque no se vino abajo, se reformó en democracia; no se destruyó, sino que se travistió en una democracia, pero eso no por propia decisión sino porque la gente estábamos luchando por unas libertades que necesitábamos, que las vivíamos como vitales para nuestra vida. (JLC, p.1, l.11-16)

En España, el Mayo del 68, llegó en los años siguientes, y llegó ya muy diluido. El régimen político no permitía ninguna libertad democrática. Arriesgarse, incluso, a participar en alguna manifestación reivindicativa podía significar fácilmente ir a la cárcel. Por lo que se consideraba por parte de las fuerzas democráticas y sociales que era prioritario el cambio de régimen. Sin embargo, no puede desdeñarse, por muy débil que fuera, el influjo de la crítica radical que se produjo en otros lugares tras las fronteras. Asimismo, la crisis “económica e industrial” afectó a este país igualmente que en el resto del mundo industrializado.

Aquí en España, en el año del 68, a pesar de que hay muchas opiniones, por las que he leído últimamente, que no tuvo ninguna influencia. Bueno, mi experiencia dice que sí que la hubo. Incluso, he llegado a leer que en aquella época hubo una reunión con altos cargos del Ministerio del Interior, con los principales directores de periódicos, para que minimizaran lo que estaba sucediendo. Y eso, que la censura previa, pues se había eliminado ya en el 62. Bueno, si no sucedía nada, no era necesaria esa reunión. (JLC, p.1, l. 17-22)

Quizás la crítica más radical surgida del Mayo del 68 francés fue la que afectaba a la concepción de revolución, mantenida hasta entonces por la izquierda, como un cambio de poder. Con eslóganes como “Plûtot la VIE”, se pretendía partir de una nueva perspectiva. Se priorizaba la crítica radical de la vida cotidiana, tanto de los individuos como las que afectaban al conjunto de la población en sus vidas del cada día. Los “hombres nuevos” ya no vendrían con la instauración de una “nueva sociedad”, los “hombres nuevos” son los que deberían construir una “nueva sociedad”. Y así, la crítica afectó tanto a las relaciones privadas, como a las públicas. Los antiguos criterios ideológicos

se desmoronaron, aun cuando fuesen luego reconstruidos. Lo mismo con lo que respecta a las instituciones sociales: familia, sindicatos, partidos, etc.

Los anarquistas, como cualquier otro grupo, ya se tratase de comunistas o socialdemócratas, estaban en España en la clandestinidad: no había derechos sociales ni individuales. Tras la guerra, el anarquismo aquí estaba casi liquidado, y los que existían eran más bien pequeños grupos, diseminados por todo el territorio.

Mi experiencia es que sí que estuvo influida, sobre todo por el Mayo del 68 francés, porque estaba ahí, sólo nos separan los Pirineos. Yo, en aquella época, estaba en la universidad. Y nos llegaba, digamos, las corrientes que se producían allí, en Francia. Y opté por una..., digamos, por los grupos libertarios que había entonces. (JLC, p.1, l.23-26)

Los movimientos sociales de aquella época propiciaron una crítica radical social como no había existido antes, al menos extendida a tal número de personas. Entre las críticas que se realizaron se encontraba la crítica al “militantismo”, y que, por lo tanto, afectaba a la ideología en general, y aunque asumida y representada por los grupos libertarios y otros como la Internationale Situationiste, este tipo de críticas no era nuevo. Ya en los años 40, una filósofa francesa, Simone Weil (2014), cristiano-anarquista podría calificarse de modo muy impreciso, en su obra “Note sur la suppression générale des partis politiques”, cuestionaba que un pensamiento libre pudiera pertenecer a algún partido político, religión, o ideología en general. Pues argumentaba que un espíritu libre no puede pensar en ningún marco de pensamiento cerrado y definido desde fuera de él.

Aunque, no me adscribí a ninguno de ellos por coherencia con lo que estaba aprendiendo del Mayo del 68, que liquidaba el partidismo. Mirando hacia atrás puedo reflexionar, pues, que un pensamiento libre, como piensa Simone Weil, pues no puede adscribirse a ningún partido político. Y voy más allá, no puede adscribirse a ningún grupo concreto. No me califico de anarquista, ni de socialista, ni de comunista... porque el Mayo del 68 me enseñó, en parte, eso. (JLC, p.1, l.28-32)

Lo que las corrientes pedagógicas progresistas y alternativas cuestionan esencialmente es que se imponga una determinada pedagogía y que su finalidad sea su adaptación a un tipo de sociedad, su encuadramiento programado, o sea, formar productores eficientes y ciudadanos obedientes. Y entre las que podríamos denominar corrientes pedagógicas alternativas estarían: la educación no-autoritaria de Summerhill; la desescolarización (*de-schooling*) propuesta por Ivan Illich, Everett Reimer, Paul Goodman, John Holt, y desde posiciones y alternativas no idénticas. Estas críticas propiciarán los movimientos de *homeschooling* y *unschooling*; entre otras.

Dentro de la pedagogía no autoritaria está Summerhill. Neill debe mucho a la pedagogía de Little Commonwealth de Homer Lane, y, posiblemente, a la experiencia de los maestros-compañeros y las comunidades escolares (*Gemeinschaftsschule*) de Hamburgo (1918-1937), que se extenderían a Bremen, Magdeburgo, Leipzig y Berlín. Contemporáneo de ellos, Neill, junto con su primera esposa Lilian, funda la que más tarde se denominaría Summerhill School, en un primer momento en los suburbios de Londres en 1921, y en 1927 se trasladaría a su actual localización en Leiston, Suffolk. En ella pretende establecer para los niños un principio de realidad no represivo, una experiencia comunitaria de la vida libre, pero no permisiva, y con un gobierno asambleario en el que la voz y el voto de niños y adultos tiene el mismo valor.

A finales de los años sesenta y principios de los años setenta, una ola de conciencia social radical recorría el planeta. En particular “la nueva generación de jóvenes estudiantes... consideraban que

la educación para el desarrollo era una continuación de la explotación capitalista del siglo XIX de la masa de la población; la educación progresiva era también rechazada como una forma más sutil de adoctrinamiento capitalista... En todo Occidente, una gran reacción y un enorme disenso transformaron seriamente la educación, en concreto en los niveles universitarios... Estas exigencias constituyeron una segunda corriente alternativa para el desarrollo educativo, que se oponía a la corriente principal del positivismo científico aplicado a la educación” (Bowen, 1985). En la segunda mitad de los años sesenta y principios de los setenta, un periodo de luchas sociales y políticas, coincidía desde 1973 con un periodo de ajustes e inestabilidad económica, pero que ya se dirigía a la llamada “globalización”, es decir al dominio de la sociedad capitalista avanzada sobre todo el planeta.

Esa crítica de la vida cotidiana, para mí, me llevo a Neill. En aquella época, en la universidad, yo tenía amigos, incluso mi primera compañera, estudiaba en Magisterio, y tenía otros amigos que también estudiaban Magisterio. Y teníamos discusiones sobre la pedagogía y ellos optaban, en su propia lógica, por gente como Freinet, como Paulo Freire. Y yo opté por Neill, porque me parecía más coherente con los tiempos que estábamos viviendo. Él iba a la raíz del problema. Él no intentaba reformar, hacer distinto el sistema pedagógico que había. Él quería experimentar otro tipo de pedagogía que se planteaba... como algo que cuestionaba el desarrollo humano del niño; del joven. [Se queda pensativo, un lapsus, y pide, con un gesto por debajo de la mesa, que se le recuerde qué más se le había preguntado]. (JLC, p.2, l. 41-49)

La pedagogía de Summerhill, desde principios de los años setenta, tendrá una relativa influencia sobre el ámbito pedagógico de la península; en particular, a través de la lenta difusión de los libros de Neill y estudios sobre Summerhill. Para valorar la literatura disponible al respecto se podría llevar a cabo mediante una investigación bibliométrica y análisis de las citas generadas. Sin embargo, dado que esto último rebasaría el ámbito de esta investigación hemos realizado una compilación de obras que se relacionan a continuación, como un reflejo de la oferta editorial disponible en España en aquellos momentos:

a) En 1973, se publican ya aquí algunos estudios, es decir primeras ediciones, sobre Summerhill. En concreto:

Laguillaume, P. (1973). “Summerhill, pedagogía de la no-represión”. En *Pedagogía ¿Educación o condicionamiento?* Barcelona: A. Redondo.

Popenoe, J. (1973). *Summerhill. Una experiencia pedagógica revolucionaria*. Barcelona: Laia.

Skidelsky, R. (1973). *La escuela progresiva: Abbotsholme, Summerhill, Gordonstoun*. Barcelona: A. Redondo.

Desde México se importaba la obra de:

Ackerman, N. W. et al. (1971). *Summerhill. Pro y contra*. México: Fondo de Cultura Económica.

A estas primeras publicaciones sobre Summerhill, se añadiría en 1975:

Hemmings, R. (1975). *Cincuenta años de libertad. Las ideas de A. S. Neill y la escuela de Summerhill*. Madrid: Alianza Editorial.

b) En lo que respecta a la obra de Neill publicada en nuestro país:

Neill, A. S. (1976). *Autobiografía*. Madrid: Fondo de Cultura Económica de España.

Neill, A. S. (1976). *Hijos en libertad*. Barcelona: Gedisa.

Neill, A. S. (1976). *Summerhill. Un punto de vista radical sobre la educación de los niños*. Madrid: Fondo de Cultura Económica de España (la de México es de 1961).

De México se importaban las siguientes:

Neil, A. S. (1973). *Hablando sobre Summerhill*. México: Editores Mexicanos Unidos.

Neill, A. S. (1975). *Corazones, no sólo cabezas en la escuela*. México: Editores Mexicanos Unidos.

Neill, A. S. (1975). *El maestro problema*. México: Editores Mexicanos Unidos.

Neill, A. S. (1975). *Padres problemas*. México: Editores Mexicanos Unidos.

c) En algunas obras de conjunto ya se incluirá algún apartado a la pedagogía de Summerhill otorgándole la misma importancia que al resto de pedagogías, como por ejemplo en:

Palacios, Jesús (1979). *La cuestión escolar: análisis y perspectivas* (pp.183-211). Barcelona: Laia.

d) En lengua catalana, no sería hasta la década de los ochenta cuando se publicarán las primeras obras de Neill:

Neill, A. S. (1986). *L'ultim supervivent*. Barcelona: La Llar del Llibre (una novela corta).

Neill, A. S. (1988). *Summerhill*. Vic: Eumo.

Bueno, lo conocí sobre todo bibliográficamente. Es decir, las experiencias que nos llegaban de Summerhill eran a través de los libros, lógicamente. Y aquí en España lo que nos llegaba, no estaba publicado aquí, venía de Sud-América, concretamente de México, y lo que pudiésemos traer de Francia, desde la frontera. Pero sobre todo a través de lo que se publicaba en México; se publicaron casi todas las obras de Neill. Entonces, yo me las leí en su época. Eso me hizo recapacitar sobre muchas cosas, no sólo sobre la pedagogía, sino sobre mi propia vida. (JLC, p. 2, l. 50-55)

Ya Linneo, en la segunda mitad del siglo XVIII, clasificaba en su taxonomía al hombre como *Homo sapiens*, y lo definía de una forma negativa mediante la máxima socrática *nosce te ipsum*, “conócete a ti mismo”, es decir por una carencia que tenía que suplir, que colmar, ya que debía conocerse a sí mismo, llevar a cabo la búsqueda de sí. Establecía, pues, la especificidad humana por la conciencia de su existencia. El epistemólogo e historiador de la ciencia André Pichot (2015) añade que ese conocerse a sí mismo es un proceso inconcluso, que está en curso a lo largo de la vida, en cuanto que el hombre se busca a sí mismo, se descubre, se construye, se inventa incluso a sí mismo, y ello de muy diferentes maneras por todo el planeta.

Para mí, la educación, o educar, es un proceso que intenta facilitar al niño, o al joven, incluso al adulto, en educación de adultos, a ser, que el hombre sea hombre, que sea realmente un ser humano. (JLC, p.2, 69-71)

Si consideramos esta definición como correcta, entonces podemos preguntarnos, ¿qué pedagogía(s) permite al ser humano buscarse e inventarse a sí mismo? Y ello sólo, desde luego, si consideramos que la pedagogía tiene como objetivo principal ayudar a la formación de seres humanos, de personas, y no de recursos humanos, de mano de obra para una economía en constante desarrollo. Este punto de vista pedagógico, pues, prima a la persona frente al modelo que reclama una sociedad de tales características que la desvirtúa, si no la niega. Neill (1994) anotaba una parte de conversación con Reich:

El verano de 1947, en Maine, no pude captar su argumento según el cual la función determina el objeto, hasta que él exclamó: “Pero, Neill, el trabajo de la vida ha tenido

como base el principio según el cual primero vienen las funciones. Tú no hiciste Summerhill para que los niños puedan estudiar y aprender a trabajar o para convertirse en “-istas” de no importa qué. No se trata de otro postulado que dejar a sus funciones ejercerse según su propio juego.

Y para mí, ser humano significa que sea un ser bueno, pero en el sentido más, digamos, positivamente egoísta de esa bondad. Como todo ser viviente busca lo bueno para sí mismo, lo que pasa es que, si uno es consecuente, esa búsqueda de lo bueno para uno mismo, le tiene que llevar obligatoriamente a buscar lo bueno para todos. Porque si todos no pueden optar por lo bueno para sí mismos, eso limita, coarta toda la bondad que pueda tener para uno mismo. (JLC, p.2, l.71-76)

Para que el ser humano sea capaz de inventarse a sí mismo, el entrevistado opina que no ha de existir ningún tipo de coacción exterior para ello. El conocerse ha de ser un acto de creación e interés propio, todo lo demás es tan solo imposición. Del mismo modo, la creación para Neill (1978) ha de surgir de uno mismo a partir de su relación con el resto de la comunidad, sin que nadie coarte a nadie. De este modo, los Summerhillianos “nunca procuran conseguir mi aprobación personal [la de Neill], sino la de toda la comunidad escolar.” Pues, “el verdadero interés es la fuerza vital de la personalidad toda, y ese interés es completamente espontáneo. Es posible obligar a atender a un esquema dibujado en el pizarrón y al mismo tiempo interesarse por los piratas. Aunque puede imponerse la atención, no puede imponerse el interés.[...] Los premios y los castigos tratan de imponer el interés.” (Neill, 1978) En resumidas cuentas “[...] estimula[r] las facultades creadoras más que la reproducción y la imitación.” (Neill, 1978)

Quizá del porqué de no plantearse la opción de que se les enviara a sus hijos a otro tipo de pedagogía, se explique, en parte, porque ya que entendía que el primer interés en el niño, parece ser el juego, y grandes corrientes pedagógicas lo instrumentan para llegar a que la enseñanza de las diversas asignaturas sea de su agrado. Sin embargo, Neill (1978) advierte que “el famoso sistema de juego dirigido, es un modo artificioso de conseguir que el niño aprenda haciendo”. Es decir, según él, “no hay en él nada creador.” (Neill, 1978) De hecho, para que el ser humano sea un ser verdaderamente creador, no debemos buscar premiarle o castigarle por sus actos, ya que “le robamos al niño el goce de la vida, el goce del descubrimiento, el goce de vencer un obstáculo. ¡Peor aún! Hacemos que el niño se crea inferior y necesitado de ayuda.” (Neill, 1978)

Después, tiene que ser un... el ser humano es un ser creador. Entonces un ser creador que es capaz de crear, de escribir su propia vida. Y, por tanto, de luchar por tener en sus propias manos, su propia vida. Y, lógicamente, que todo el mundo pueda optar a tener en sus manos, su propia vida. Que pueda influir, y crear su propia vida. (JLC, p.2, l.77-80)

El hombre y su definición ontológica de Pichot y Linneo hablan de que el hombre ha de llegar a ser mediante su propia búsqueda. Para ello, Neill, desde el plano de la psicología, opina que se debe permitir que los niños puedan desarrollarse con plena libertad, pero en un entorno, en una pequeña comunidad, la escuela, que es solidaria con todos sus miembros, es decir, dentro de un organismo solidario, como referente, que ayude a que aflore ese instinto “egoísta” solidario que tiene cada niño dentro de sí:

Pedirle a un niño que no sea egoísta es un error. Todo niño es egoísta y el mundo le pertenece. [...] El altruismo llega después –llega de un modo natural– *si no se le enseña al niño a no ser egoísta*. Probablemente no llegará nunca si se le ha obligado al niño a

no ser egoísta. Al tratar de suprimir el egoísmo del niño, la madre está fijando el egoísmo para siempre. (Neill, 1978)

El niño al dejársele ser en comunidad asume su sentido de una responsabilidad libremente: “La autonomía o gobierno de sí mismo implica la creencia en la bondad de la naturaleza humana, creencia en que no hay, ni hubo nunca, pecado original.” (Neill, 1978). Más adelante añade: “Por lo general, Summerhill se rige sin ninguna autoridad ni ninguna obediencia. Cada individuo es libre de hacer lo que quiera *mientras no invada la libertad de otros*. Y éste es un objetivo realizable en toda comunidad.” (Neill, 1978)

“Darle libertad es permitirle al niño vivir su propia vida. dicho así, parece sencillo. Sólo nuestra desastrosa costumbre de enseñar, moldear, sermonear y coaccionar nos hace incapaces de comprender la sencillez de la verdadera libertad.” (Neill, 1978) Neill más adelante concluye: “En suma, lo que sostengo es que la educación sin libertad da por resultado una vida que no puede ser vivida plenamente. Tal educación ignora casi por completo las *emociones* de la vida; [...] Sólo se educa la cabeza. Si se permitiera ser verdaderamente libres, el intelecto se cuidaría de sí mismo.”

[Revisa unas notas sobre la mesa y continúa] *Después, el ser humano para mí es un ser libre. O debe ser un ser libre. Un ser libre que no admita ninguna sumisión a nada, ni a nadie. Y debe ser un ser reflexivo, porque debe ser capaz de tener su propio pensamiento, no debe tomar prestados pensamientos de nadie, aunque se equivoque. Es decir, alguien que es capaz de reflexionar, de tener sus propias ideas y de corregir esas ideas.* (JLC, p.2, l.81-86)

“Si no enseñamos moral, se podría preguntar ¿cómo aprenderán los niños a distinguir el bien del mal?” (Appelton, 2000) El hombre se define por medio de su propia función vital, le decía Reich a Neill (1994). En Summerhill, la autonomía individual puede ser, porque hay un gobierno autónomo, autorregulado que así lo permite; en ese gobierno intervienen niños, niñas, maestros y maestras. En él se trata todo lo relacionado con la convivencia de la escuela: “las funciones del gobierno autónomo de Summerhill no consiste sólo en hacer leyes, sino también en discutir las características sociales de la comunidad.” (Neill, 1978) Además, esas leyes y características sociales van cambiando de generación en generación, por lo que estamos ante un régimen democrático directo y que renueva, se ajusta a la experiencia colectiva.

Pero, ¿qué ocurre con el egoísmo? Acabaría sacrificando la comunidad. Sin embargo, como explica Neill (1978): “En Summerhill cuando un niño de siete años se causa a sí mismo daño social, toda la comunidad expresa su desaprobación. Como la aprobación social es algo que todo el mundo desea, el niño aprende a conducirse bien.” De hecho, “el buen gobierno autónomo sólo es posible en una escuela cuando hay un grupo de alumnos antiguos a quienes les gusta la vida tranquila y luchan contra la indiferencia o la oposición de la edad del gangster.” (Neill, 1978) Es decir que al hacerse mayores, aquellos que vivieron el egoísmo en libertad, pasan de esta etapa al altruismo de manera natural y son precisamente esos jóvenes libres, los que cuidan y protegen su comunidad:

Esos viejos alumnos son vencidos con frecuencia en las votaciones, pero son ellos quienes realmente creen en el gobierno autónomo y lo quieren. Los niños de hasta, digamos, doce años, por otra parte, no practicarán un buen gobierno autónomo porque no han llegado aún a la edad social. Sin embargo, en Summerhill rara vez faltan a las asambleas generales los niños de siete años. (Neill, 1978)

Y, por último, quizá, es un ser social. Un ser social que vive en una comunidad, porque no hay Robinson Crusoe, ni vivimos aisladamente, necesitamos de los demás y ellos

nos necesitan a nosotros. Y, por tanto, hay un sentido de solidaridad. Lo que afecta a los demás, nos afecta a nosotros. (JLC, p. 2, l. 87-90)

La pedagogía de Summerhill es cierto que no puede ser libre en todos sus aspectos: “En la práctica real existe autoridad, naturalmente. Esa autoridad puede llamarse protección, cuidado, responsabilidad del adulto” (Neill, 1978). Pero ello no significa que se les imponga, que se les quiera moldear, sino para su cuidado y de los demás: “Por lo general Summerhill se rige sin ninguna autoridad ni ninguna obediencia. Cada individuo es libre de hacer lo que quiera mientras no invada la libertad de otros. Y éste es un objetivo realizable en toda comunidad” (Neill, 1978). Con todo, como dice Appleton (2000):

Los exsummerhillianos no son una especie aparte del resto de nosotros. Tienen sus altibajos como el resto del mundo. Están lejos de ser perfectos. Sería tan prejuicioso idealizar Summerhill y a quienes asisten a la escuela como lo sería demonizarla y suponer que produce fracasados e inadaptados sociales. Pero Summerhill sí proporciona algo que muchos niños no llegan a probar: un rasgo de libertad y aceptación poco común. De niños de los que se escuchaban y respetaban sus voces. Podían jugar e ir a clase cuando querían. Podían crear las normas y también quebrantarlas. Estas experiencias ayudaron a perfilar quienes son hoy en día y –y pienso que la mayoría de ellos estaría de acuerdo– son personas más felices por ello.

Y, por tanto, a pesar de todo, se sigue una línea pedagógica coherente, ya que, en palabras de Neill (1978): “la libertad significa hacer lo que se quiera mientras no se invada la libertad de los demás. El resultado es la autodisciplina” (Neill, 1978).

Pero lo que [se para y revisa sus notas de nuevo], pero lo que pienso, es que hay, de una forma quizá un poco simplista, un poco... no es real, sé que no es real, hay muchos matices, del blanco al negro, hay muchos matices de grises. Y que a lo mejor el blanco y el negro no existen en realidad, yo pienso que no existen. Pero sí que existen gradaciones y Summerhill está en la gradación más [se apoya en las manos con gesto decisivo] libre de las que he conocido. (JLC, p. 4, l. 134-139)

Se podría considerar, y así al menos lo expresa en la entrevista JLC, aun cuando pueda caer quizás en una abstracción arriesgada y simplificadora, la posibilidad de dividir a la pedagogía a lo largo de la historia, en dos grandes grupos: por una parte, unas pedagogías que dicen lo que el niño, el joven, el hombre tiene que ser y llegar a ser, y lo que tiene que aprender, cómo y cuándo; y, por otra parte, otras pedagogías que dejan que sea, que se descubra y que llegue a ser, y que aprenda, que asimile lo que decida a su propio ritmo para beneficio propio y de su comunidad.

Se apoya en estas consideraciones para justificar su decisión de, al menos, intentar que sus hijos pudiesen tener otra pedagogía más libre, diferente a la desarrollada en la mayoría de las escuelas de este país, como la de Summerhill.

Para mí existen, digamos, dos tipos de, si se me permite, dos tipos de pedagogías: Unas que intentan imponer un modo de vida, un modo de ser; por lo tanto, las considero autoritarias. Y me da igual que esa imposición de ese modelo se haga desde una forma dura o blanda y edulcorada. Y otra pedagogía que es tolerante, que tiene confianza en el niño, en el joven o adulto, no es directiva, por tanto, no es autoritaria y es tremendamente tolerante. (JLC, p.4. l.139-144)

El que fracasase en su intento de llevar a sus hijos a Summerhill nos conduce a otras cuestiones algo aparte de esta investigación, y que muestra la complejidad de ésta. Las corrientes, teorías y

experiencias pedagógicas centradas en la persona, son calificadas muy a menudo de “utópicas”, pedagogías alternativas, no directivas, no autoritarias.

El filósofo francés Miguel Abensour (2014) prevenía sobre las diferentes actitudes ante el concepto “utopía”:

Su acepción varía según la posición que ocupe la persona que lo emplee en el *polemos* [principio de separación] que divide la ciudad. Supone una guerra entre quienes quieren conservar la ciudad tal y como está y los que quieren transformarla para avanzar hacia una sociedad mejor. Para los primeros, el término de utopía es evidentemente peyorativo y descalifica todo proyecto que suponga sobrepasar lo posible. Para los segundos, la palabra utopía conlleva un sentido positivo en la medida en que designa vías específicas encaminadas a cambiar el mundo.

Summerhill no deja de ser, en un sentido práctico, una utopía bajo la forma de pequeña comunidad experimental, una experiencia pedagógica aislada, que, al menos por ahora, no es posible generalizar a una amplia comunidad pedagógica, que no puede ser aceptada para mayorías en el marco de nuestra sociedad actual. Sin embargo, la utopía de la pedagogía de Summerhill, como otras, puede ser considerada como impulsora del necesario cambio pedagógico, y como parte de un cambio hacia una sociedad mejor. Pues, no es difícil sostener que una pedagogía como la que se desarrolla mayoritariamente en nuestra sociedad no es sostenible por mucho tiempo.

Pero lo único que me arrepiento y... es de no haber dado la oportunidad a mis hijos a que tuviesen una educación, como dicen todos los padres, lo mejor que yo opinaba, que yo tenía eso. Pero yo no soy ningún director de teatro, los personajes son libres, yo no puedo imponer mi criterio, mi opinión y debo reconocer mis limitaciones. Pero sí que me arrepiento de que ellos no hubiesen podido ir. (JLC, p.5, l.151-155)

5. CONCLUSIÓN

Es una tarea realmente difícil, sino casi imposible, poder llegar a desentrañar y a comprender toda la complejidad que conllevan ciertas decisiones en la vida de las personas, ciertas decisiones importantes vivencialmente para ellas. Este estudio puede considerarse como un modesto intento de ello.

Summerhill, como cualquier otra pedagogía, es criticable y, por tanto, mejorable. Pero las críticas esconden muchas veces la justificación de las prácticas de los que las hacen, y en una gran mayoría se hacen desde las palabras, no desde el conocimiento directo de esa experiencia. “Me choca que [los pro y contras emitidos] tengan tan poco que ver con la vida real en Summerhill [...] No están basados en la experiencia sino en opiniones y solo opiniones” (Appleton, 2000). Neill reflexionaba sobre el mundo que le tocó vivir de grandes guerras, de violencia siempre presente en nuestras vidas de cada día, no muy distinto al de nuestros días:

¿Por qué el hombre odia y mata en la guerra, y los animales no? [...] ¿Por qué hay tantos suicidios? ¿Y tantos crímenes sexuales? [...] ¿Por qué la calumnia y el rencor? [...] ¿Por qué es obsceno y un juego lujurioso, el sexo? [...] ¡Por qué!, ¡mil por qué sobre nuestro estado de eminencia civilizada! [...]. Hago estas preguntas porque soy maestro, es decir, un individuo que trabaja con jóvenes [...] Hago estas preguntas porque las que

suelen hacer los maestros son las que no tienen importancia, las relativas a asuntos escolares. (1978)

Porque el reto de la educación, a mi modo de ver, debe ser “la realización natural de la vida, de la felicidad interior del hombre (Neill, 1978). Se puede estar de acuerdo o desacuerdo con la pedagogía de Neill, con su “exceso” de libertad, pero la práctica de Summerhill muestra una coherencia que no es fácilmente cuestionable.

Para concluir, entre las muchas cosas que he aprendido con esta investigación es que la actitud del entrevistado llega incluso a cuestionar mi papel de mero observador, mi objetividad en este estudio y, lo que es más importante para mí, a cuestionarme en este permanente envite pedagógico y social; dicho en otras palabras, me plantea la cuestión de ¿cuáles son mis utopías? ¿Cuáles son mis opciones pedagógicas y sociales?

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ANEXO I

Diversos informes de los inspectores de educación del gobierno Británico sobre Summerhill School (de los años: 1949, 1999, 2005, 2007, 2011, 2012 y 2016).

Summerhill School

*Report of the British Government Inspectors**

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

CURZON STREET

LONDON, W.1.

IND: 38B/6/8.

This School is famous throughout the world as one in which educational experiment is conducted on revolutionary lines and in which the published theories of its Head Master, widely known and discussed, are put into practice. The task of inspecting it proved to be exacting and interesting, exacting because of the wide difference in practice between this School and others with which the inspectors were familiar, and interesting because of the opportunity offered of trying to assess, and not merely to observe, the value of the education given.

All the children in the School are boarders and the annual fee is £120. In spite of the low salaries paid the staffs, which will be referred to later, the Head Master finds it difficult to run the School at this figure which he is reluctant to increase in view of what he knows the financial circumstances of the parents. Although the fee is low, compared with that at many independent boarding schools and the staffing ratio is high, the inspectors were a little surprised at the financial difficulties of which the Head Master complained. Only scrutiny of accounts and expenses could show whether costs could be cut without loss and it might be a plan to invite such a scrutiny from some independent and experienced source. In the meantime it may be said that whatever else is deficient, the children are well and plentifully fed.

The principles upon which the School is conducted are well known to the readers the Head Master's books. Some have gained wide acceptance since they were first declared, some are gained wide acceptance since they were first declared, some are exerting a widening influence in schools generally while others are regarded with suspicion and abhorrence by the majority of teachers and parents. While the inspectors tried to follow their normal custom of assessing what is being done in an objective manner, it appears to them impossible to report fairly on the School without some reference to its principles and aims, whether they accept them personally or not.

The main principle the School is run is freedom. This freedom is not quite unqualified. There is a number of laws concerned with safety of life and limb made by the children but approved by the Head Master only if they are sufficiently stringent. Children, for instance, cannot bathe except in the presence of two member of the staff who are lifesavers. The younger children cannot go out of the School grounds without the escort of older ones. These, and similar regulations, are categorical, and transgressors are punished by a system of fine. But the degree of freedom allowed to the children is very much greater than the inspectors had seen in any other school, and the freedom is real. No child, for instance, is obliged to attend any lessons. As

*Report by H. M. Inspectors on the Summerhill School, Leiston, Suffolk, inspected on 20th and 21st June, 1949.

will be revealed later, the majority do attend for the most part regularly, but one pupil was actually at this School for thirteen years without once attending a lesson and is now an expert toolmaker and precision instrument maker. This extreme case is mentioned to show that the freedom given to children is genuine and is not withdrawn as soon as its results become awkward. The School, however, is not run on anarchist principles. Laws are made by a school parliament which meets regularly under the chairmanship of a child and is attended by any staff and child who wish. This assembly has unlimited power of discussion and apparently fairly wide ones of legislation. On one occasion it discussed the dismissal of a teacher, showing, it is understood, excellent judgement in its opinion. But such an event is rare, and normally the parliament is concerned with the day-to-day problems of living in a community.

The inspectors were able to attend a session on the first day of the inspection. The principal matters under discussion were the enforcement of the bedtime regulations made by the parliament and the control of entry into the kitchen at unauthorized times. These problems were discussed with great vigour and freedom of comment, in a reasonably orderly fashion and without respect of persons. Although it seemed that a good deal of time was spent on some rather fruitless lines of argument, the Inspectors were disposed to agree with the Head Master that the experience of learning how to organize their own affairs was more valuable to the children than the time lost.

It is evident that the majority of parents and teachers would be most hesitant to grant complete freedom in the matter of sex. Many who would agree with the Head Master up to a point would part company with him there. They would, perhaps, have no difficulty in accepting his view that sex knowledge should be freely given, that sex should be separated from guilt and that many long-accepted inhibitions have done infinite harm, but they would, in a mixed school, take more precautions than he does. It is, obvious, exceedingly difficult to comment fairly upon the results of not doing so. In any community of adolescents sexual feeling must be present and they will certainly not be removed by being surrounded by taboos. They are, in fact, likely to be inflamed. At the same time, as the Head Master agrees, complete freedom to express them is not possible even if it is desirable. All that can safely be said here is that it would be difficult to find a more natural, open-faced, unself-conscious collection of boys and girls, and disasters which some might have expected to occur girls, and disasters which some might have expected to occur have not occurred in all the twenty-eight years of the School's existence.

One other highly controversial matter must be mentioned here, the absence of any kind of religious life or instruction. There is no ban on religion, and if the school parliament decided to introduce it, it would presumably be introduced. Similarly, if an individual wanted it, nothing would be done to hinder him. The children all come from families which do not accept orthodox Christian doctrines, and in fact no desire for religion has ever been expressed. Without doing any violence to the term it may safely be said that many Christian principles are put into practice in this School and that there is much in it of which any Christian can approve. The effects of the complete absence of religious instruction could obviously not be judged in a two days' inspection.

It seemed necessary to write this introductory account of the School before proceeding to the more usual material of a report. It is against this background of real freedom that the organization and activities of the School must be viewed.

Organization

There are seventy children between the ages of four and sixteen. They live in four separate buildings which will be described in the section on premises. In this section their education in the narrower sense of the word will be described. There are six Forms organized very loosely according to age but with considerable weighting according to ability. These Forms meet according to a quite ordinary and orthodox timetable of five forty-minute periods on five mornings a week. They have definite places of meeting and definite teachers to teach them. Where they differ from similar Forms in ordinary schools is that there is not the slightest guarantee that everyone, or indeed anyone, will turn up. The inspectors were at much pains to discover what in fact happened, both by attending classes and by inquiry. It appears that attendance increases in regularity as the children grow older and that once a child has decided to attend a particular class he usually does so regularly. It was much more difficult to discover whether the balance of work and subjects was a good one. As many of the children take the School Certificate, their choice is controlled by examination requirements as the examination approaches; but the younger ones are completely free to choose. On the whole the results of this system are unimpressive. It is true that the children work with a will and an interest that is most refreshing, but their achievements are rather meagre. This is not, in the inspectors' opinion, an inevitable result of the system, but rather of the system working badly. Among its causes appears to be:

1. The lack of a good teacher of juniors who can supervise and integrate their work and activities.

2. The quality of the teaching generally. The teaching of infants is, as far as could be judged, enlightened and effective and there is some good teaching in the upper Forms, but the lack of a good junior teacher who can inspire and stimulate the 8, 9 and 10 year olds is most apparent. Some surprisingly old-fashioned and formal methods are in use, and when the children reach the age at which they are ready for advanced work they suffer from considerable disadvantages and present their teachers with severe problems. The teaching of the older children is a good deal better and in one or two cases really good.

3. The children lacked guidance. It is commendable that a fifteen-year-old girl should decide that she would like to learn French and German, two languages that she had previously neglected, but to allow her to attempt this task in two periods for German and three for French a week is surely a little irresponsible. The child's progress was slow in spite of her admirable determination and she ought to have allowed much more time. It appears to the inspectors that some kind of tutorial system might be developed to assist children in planning their work.

4. Lack of privacy. "Summerhill is a difficult place in which to study". The words are the Head Master's. It is a hive of activity and there is much to capture the attention and interest. No child has a room to himself and there are no rooms specially set apart for quiet study. A

determined person could no doubt always find somewhere. But the necessary degree of determination is rare. Few children remain in the School beyond the age of sixteen though where is nothing to prevent them.. There are and have been some extremely able and intelligent children at Summerhill and it must be doubted whether, academically, it is giving them all that they need.

At the same time there is some excellent work done wherever the quality of the teaching is good. The Arts is outstanding. It was difficult to detect any significant difference between the painting of Summerhill children and that of children from many much more traditional schools, but by any standard the work was good. Some good craft work in great variety was to be seen. The installation of a kiln was going on during the inspection and the pots awaiting first firing were excellent in form. The provision of a treadle-loom would allow another craft which has made promising beginnings to develop.

A good deal of creative written work is done, including a Wall Newspaper, and plays which are written and acted every term. A good deal was heard of these plays, but it is apparently not customary to preserve the scripts so it was not possible to judge of their quality. Recently a performance of *Macbeth* was given in the small School theatre, all the sets and dresses being homemade. It was interesting to learn that this was decided upon by the children against the wishes of the Head Master who prefers them to act plays of their own writing.

Physical Education is carried on in accordance with the principles of the School. There are no compulsory games or physical training. Football, cricket, and tennis are all played with enthusiasm, football it is understood with considerable skill owing to the presence on the staff of an expert. The children arrange matches with other schools in the town. On the day visited there was a cricket match against the neighbouring modern school, in which Summerhill had decided not to play their best player having learned that their opponents' best player was ill.

A great deal of time is spent out of doors, and the children lead an active, healthy life and look like it. Only a close and expert investigation could reveal how much, if anything, they lose from the absence of more formal Physical Education.

Premises

The School is situated in ground which give ample scope for recreation. The main building was formerly a private house, provides for school purposes a hall, a dining room, sick rooms, an arte room, a small craft room and the girls' dormitories. The youngest children sleep in a cottage, where their classroom is also situated. The dormitories for the other boys and the remaining classrooms are in huts in the garden, where are also the bedrooms of some members of the staff. All these rooms have doors opening directly to the garden. The classrooms are small, though not unsuitable, as the teaching is done in small groups. One of the dormitories represents a notable building effort by the boys and staff: it was built as a sanatorium for which apparently no use has arisen. The sleeping accommodation is somewhat primitive when judged by normal standards, but it is understood that the health record of the School is good, and the provision may be regarded as satisfactory. There are sufficient bathrooms available.

While these garden premises are at first sight unusually primitive and public, they do in fact seem to be eminently well suited for creating the atmosphere of a permanent holiday camp

which is an important feature of the School. Moreover they gave the opportunity of seeing how the children pursued their studies entirely undisturbed by the many visitors, who were present on the day of the inspection.

Staff

The staff are paid £8 a month with board and lodging. To find men and women who not only believe in the principles of the School but are sufficiently mature and well balanced to be able to live on equal terms with children, who are well qualified academically and highly skilled as teachers and then to persuade them to work for £8 a month, must be a considerable task for the Head Master. Service at Summerhill is not a recommendation in many quarters, and the necessary combination of conviction, disinterestedness, character and ability is rare. It has already been pointed out that the staff are not equal to all the demands, yet they are very much better than the staff of many independent schools paying much higher salaries. They include an M.A. (Hons.) Edinburgh in English, an M.A. and B.Sc. of Liverpool, a Cambridge Wrangler, an F.A. (Hons.) London in French and German, and a Cambridge B.A. in History. Four have teacher's qualifications. This does not include the teachers of arts and crafts who have foreign qualifications and are among the best on the staff.

While they need strengthening here and there, the present staff is far from being weak and if, by attendance at courses and visits of observation, they could widen and refresh their experience and bring themselves up to date, they could give a very good account of themselves. At the same time it is too much to hope that a salary of £96 a year can go on attracting to this School the teachers that is needed and it seems clear that this difficulty will have to be squarely faced.

The Head Master is a man of deep conviction and sincerity. His faith and patience must be inexhaustible. He has the rare power of being a strong personality without dominating. It is impossible to see him in his School without respecting him even if one disagrees with or even dislikes some of his ideas. He has a sense of humour, a warm humanity and a strong common sense which would make him a good Head Master anywhere, and his happy family life is shared with the children who are presumably as capable of profiting by example as any others.

He takes a broad view of education as the means of learning how to live abundantly and, though he would admit the force of some at least of the criticism in this Report, he would feel that it allows its pupils to grow into, rather than by the specific skills and abilities that it teaches them. On this basis of evaluation it may be said:

I. That the children are full of life and zest. Of boredom and apathy there was no sign. An atmosphere of contentment and tolerance pervades the School. The affection with which it is regarded by its old pupils is evidence of its success. An average number of thirty attend the end-of-term plays and dances, and many make the School their headquarters during the holidays.

It may be worth noting at this point that, whereas in its early days the School was attended almost entirely by "problem" children, the intake is now from a fairly normal cross-section of the population.

2. That the children's manners are delightful. They may lack, here and there. Some of the conventions of manners, but their friendliness, ease and naturalness, and their total lack of shyness and self-consciousness made them very easy, pleasant people to get on with.

3. That initiative, responsibility and integrity are all encouraged by the system and that, so far as such things can be judged, they are in fact being developed.

4. That such evidence as is available does not suggest that the products of Summerhill are unable to fit into ordinary society when they leave School. Information such as follows does not of course tell the whole story but it indicates that Summerhill education is not necessarily hostile to worldly success. Old pupils have become a Captain in the R.E.M.E. (royal Electrical/Mechanical Engineers), a Battery Q.M.S. (Quartermaster Sergeant), a bomber pilot and Squadron Leader, a Nursery Nurse, an Air Hostess, a clarinet player in the Grenadier Guards Band, a Beit Fellow of the Imperial College, a ballet dancer at Sadler's Wells, a radio operator and contributor of short stories to an important national daily newspaper, and a market research investigator with a big firm. They have taken the following degrees etc., among others: F.A. Hons. Econ. Cambridge; Scholar, Royal Hons. History, Cambridge: B.A. 1st Class Hons. Modern Languages. Manchester.

5. The Head Master's educational views make this School an exceptionally suitable place for the type of education in which such fundamental work is not unduly governed by examination requirements. To have created a situation in which academic education of the most intelligent kind could flourish is an achievement, but in fact it is not flourishing and a great opportunity is thus being lost. With better teaching at all stages, and above all the junior stage, it might be made to flourish, and an experiment of profound interest be given its full chance to prove itself.

There remains in the mind some doubts both about principles and about methods. A closer and longer acquaintance with the School would perhaps remove some of these and possibly intensify others. What cannot be doubted is that a piece of fascinating and valuable educational research is going on here which it would do all educationists good to see.

Notes on His Majesty's Inspectors' Report

We were indeed lucky to have two broad-minded inspectors sent to us. We dropped "mister" straightaway. During the two days' visit, we had quite a few friendly arguments.

I felt that school inspectors were accustomed to picking up a French book in front of a class and quizzing the class to find out what the pupils knew. I reasoned that that kind of training and experience would be of little use in inspecting the worth of a school in which lessons were not the prime criterion. I said to one of the inspectors, "You really can't inspect Summerhill because our criteria are happiness, sincerity, balance and sociability". He grinned and said they'd have a go at it anyway. And both our inspectors made a remarkable adaptation, and obviously enjoyed themselves in the process.

Odd things struck them. Said one, "What a delightful shock it is to enter a classroom and find the children not taking any notice of you, after years of seeing classes jump to attention". Yes, we were lucky to have the two of them.

But to the report itself: "the inspectors were a little surprised at the financial difficulties..." The answer lies mostly in bad debts, yet that is not the whole story. The report mentions an annual fee of £120, but since then we have tried to cope with high price throughout the years by raising the average annual fee to about £520. This does not allow anything for repairs to the buildings, for purchasing new apparatus, and so on. For one thing, damages are heavier in Summerhill than in a disciplined school. Summerhill children are allowed to go through their gangster period, and consequently more furniture is destroyed.

The report says that we have seventy children. Today, we are down to forty-five, a fact that offsets to some extent the rise in fees.

The report speaks of the poor teaching of our juniors. We have always had that difficulty. Even with an excellent teacher, it is difficult to get through the ordinary public school work if only for the reason that the children are free to do other things. If children in a public school at the age of ten or twelve could climb trees or dig holes instead of going to lessons, their standards would be like ours. But we accept the fact that our boys and girls will have a period during which there must be a lower standard of learning, because we think that play is of greater importance during this period in their lives than learning.

Even if we assume that the backwardness in lessons of our juniors is important, it is still true that a year later these same juniors, then turned seniors, passed the Oxford exams with very good grades. These pupils were examined in a total of 39 subjects, an average of 6½ subjects for each pupil. The results were 24 *Very Good*, which is better than 70 per cent. In all the 39 exams, there was only one failure. The handicap of not being up to regular school standard when a boy is a junior in Summerhill does not necessarily mean that such a pupil will be at a low standard when he is a senior.

For my part I have always liked late starters. I have seen quite a few bright children who could recite Milton at four blossom forth as drunkards and loafers at twenty-four. I like to meet the man who at the age of fifty-three says he doesn't quite know what he is to be in life. I have a hunch that the boy who knows at seven just what he wants to be may be an inferior who will have a conservative attitude to life later on.

The report says: "To have created a situation in which academic education of the most intelligent kind could flourish is an achievement; but in fact, it is the only paragraph in which the two inspectors did not rise above their academic preoccupations. Our system flourishes when a child *wants* an academic education, as our exam results show. But perhaps the inspector's paragraph means that better junior teaching would result in more children *wanting* to take matriculation exams.

It is not time that we put academic education in its place? Academic education too often tries to make a silk purse out of a sow's ear. I wonder what an academic education would have done for some of our old Summerhill pupils—a dress designer, a hairdresser, a male ballet dancer, some musicians, some children's nurses, some mechanics, some engineers, and half a dozen artist.

Yes it is a fair report, a sincere one, a generous one. I am publishing it simply because it is good that the reading public should see a view of Summerhill that is not my own. Note that the report does not carry any form of official recognition by the Ministry of Education. Personally, I do not mind; but recognition would have been welcome of two factors: the teachers would

have come under the State Superannuation Scheme, and parents would have a better chance of getting aid from local Councils.

I should like to put on record the fact that Summerhill has never had any difficulty with the Ministry of Education. Any inquiry, any visit of mine to the Ministry, has been met with courtesy and friendliness. My only setback came when the Minister refused permission for a Scandinavian parent to import and erect prefabs, free of charge, just after the war.

When I think of the authoritative interest taken by European governments in private schools, I am glad I live and work in a country that allows so much scope to private venture. I show tolerance of children; the Ministry shows tolerance of my school. I am content.

SUMMERHILL SCHOOL

WESTWARD HO

LEISTON

SUFFOLK IP16 4HY

Reporting inspector: Mr N Grenyer HMI

Dates of inspection: 1-5 March 1999

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Information about the school

Name of school:	Summerhill School
Type of school:	Boarding
Status:	Registered
Association membership:	None
Age range:	9-17
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	boys: 34 girls: 22 total: 56
Number of boarders:	boys: 30 girls: 19 total: 49
Number of pupils with English as an additional language:	32
Termly fees (day pupils)	£2,046-£3,085
Termly fees (boarders)	£5,049-£6,897
School address:	Summerhill School, Westward Ho, Leiston, Suffolk IP16 4HY

Telephone/fax number:	01728 830540
Headteacher:	Mrs Zoe Readhead
Proprietor:	As above
Chair of Governing Body	N/A
DfEE number:	935/6016

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PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE INSPECTION

1. This inspection was carried out in order to advise the Secretary of State for Education and Employment of Summerhill School's suitability for registration under the Education Act 1996. The report therefore concentrates on those aspects of the school relevant to that purpose. No subjects of the curriculum are reported on in detail, although there is a greater degree of reference to English, mathematics and science.
2. HMI has had significant concerns about the school for a number of years and it has been regularly inspected over the past decade. Full inspections of the school were carried out in May 1990 and June 1993. The Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) issued a Notice of Complaint after the first of these inspections, but this was lifted when it appeared the school intended to take action on each of the key weaknesses that had been identified. Subsequent monitoring visits by HMI indicated that planned actions were not generally being implemented, leading to the second full inspection.
3. Since then the pattern has been repeated of strongly critical inspection findings being followed by promising plans of action that were only very partially, if at all, implemented by the school. When HMI last visited the school in June 1998, they found evidence of significant planning to address the weakness identified by the previous inspections. This full inspection was carried out to establish the extent to which the necessary improvements had been made and whether the school remained suitable for registration.
4. The last report indicated that the school had changed little in character since 1990; that remains true. It still makes unique provision with unusual appeal, in many respects guarding closely the philosophy of its founder AS Neill, challenging many of the values inherent in conventional education. Some pupils have learning difficulties and a large proportion of pupils are from overseas: many having experienced little success in conventional education.
5. This report cannot and does not pass judgement on the unique philosophy on which Summerhill is founded. It focuses upon the issue of whether the quality of the education provided is effective in practice.

MAIN FINDINGS

6. Summerhill is not providing an adequate education for its pupils. Whether the pupils make sufficient progress and achieve the standards of which they are capable is left to each child's inclination. As a result, those willing to work achieve satisfactory or even good standards, while the rest are allowed to drift and fall behind.

7. There are some strengths. Standards of speaking and listening are good, as are standards of reading in Key Stage 4. Those pupils who are inclined to learn often enjoy good, well-differentiated teaching and achieve satisfactory or good standards, especially in mathematics. Similarly, the provision of English as an additional language (EAL) is effective for those who choose to attend lessons.

8. In general, pupils are well-behaved and courteous, if often foul-mouthed. They relate well to the staff and to each other. Because of their democratic participation in most aspects of decision-making in the school, pupils have a practical understanding of citizenship.

9. Sadly, these comparative strengths cannot compensate for the many and serious weaknesses. In Key Stage 2, pupils make insufficient progress throughout the curriculum because of erratic attendance of lessons. The many pupils who do not regularly attend classes in Key Stages 3 and 4 achieve poor standards of numeracy, reading and writing, and underachieve across the subjects of the curriculum as a whole. Some pupils with special educational needs make insufficient progress for the same reason. Similarly a significant number of overseas students do not benefit from the EAL teaching and so do not acquire sufficient command of English to take full part in the democratic system which the school claims as its distinctive strength.

10. A root cause of these defects is non-attendance at lessons: for example, some pupils abandon mathematics for up to two years on end. That is compounded by the fact that neither the short-term nor the long-term planning by the teaching staff take account of this erratic pattern of attendance, least of all in Key Stage 2. Consequently, for the great majority of the pupils, their curriculum is fragmented, disjointed, narrow and likely adversely to affect their future options.

11. This amounts to an abrogation of educational responsibility and a failure of management and leadership. The school has drifted into confusing educational freedom with the negative right not to be taught. As a result, many pupils have been allowed to mistake the pursuit of idleness for the exercise of personal liberty.

12. In relation to the arrangements for boarding, the school has suitable procedures for child protection in place. Beyond this, there is a catalogue of shortcomings. Pupils who do not attend lessons are unsupervised. There is no resident adult to supervise senior boarders. The security of the site is inadequate. One member of staff has not been checked against List 99, so the school cannot guarantee that all are fit persons to teach children. Boys and girls share common toilets contrary to the Children Act 1989 guidance and despite the recommendation of the Suffolk social service department that this practice should cease. In addition to this, many problems of cleanliness and health and safety were identified and are set out in paragraphs 71-73.

13. Few real improvements have been made since the last HMI inspection report. The local social services' recommendations have been rejected by the school as against the school's ethos.

14. Actions to address the key issues from the 1993 inspection report remain either ineffective or unimplemented. Standards of achievement still need to be raised, especially at Key Stage 2. The rate of attendance at lessons remains low in line with the school's philosophy of voluntary attendance. The range of curricular provision remains narrow in terms of what is actually delivered to pupils. Accommodation, including toilet and dormitory arrangements, fail to meet minimum standards.

15. The school fails to meet the requirements for registration under the Education Act 1996 in the following respects: the instruction is not efficient or suitable; the welfare of boarders is not adequately safeguarded and promoted; the school does not provide suitable accommodation.

KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

16. In order to improve the quality of education the school must:

- ¥ raise standards, especially in relation to the core subjects of English, mathematics and science;
- ¥ ensure that all pupils are fully engaged in study across a broad and balanced curriculum throughout their time in school;
- ¥ improve the quality of planning and teaching at Key Stage 2;
- ¥ make the standard welfare provision required by the Children Act 1989, as recommended in the Suffolk social services report of 1997;
- ¥ improve the accommodation, including toilet facilities and boarding arrangements;
- ¥ deal with the matters of health and safety raised in paragraphs 71-73.

INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the school

17. Summerhill is a privately owned, independent school for pupils aged 5- 17, located in a small town in rural Suffolk. It claims to be a democratic, self-governing school, where every person, whether pupil or adult, has an equal vote on how the community is to be run. The weekly meetings allow children to learn and to vote on the rules of the community. In so doing it is hoped that they will learn and appreciate its values so that they can, as individuals, effect change. Summerhill's expressed

primary aim is to allow pupils to develop at their own pace and to discover their own interests. Lessons are not compulsory, children are free to attend if they wish. The school places great importance on children being able to spend time at play, which is held to be as important as intellectual learning, the motivation for which comes from the child when the child is ready for it. A further principle is that assessment should not be imposed on children.

Key indicators

Attainment

18. The school makes no use of National Curriculum assessments.

19. GCSE examinations are taken. In the last two years, some pupils have sat these examinations aged 13, 14, 15, and 16; however, many of the entries have been from those in Year 12 (that is one year after the national norm). Over half of the pupils are from overseas and have to learn English as an additional language.

20. The school was unable to provide the required information of the number of pupils in each previous examination cohort on the pre-inspection form. It was not possible, therefore, to make comparisons with national figures. In 1998, 20 pupils in Years 10-12 made a total of 69 GCSE entries and 52 of these (75.3 per cent) gained A*-C grades. In 1997, 25 pupils in Years 9-12 made a total of 97 entries and of these 62 (63.9 per cent) achieved grades A*-C.

Attendance

Percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year:

		%
Authorised	School	0
	National comparative data	7/9
Unauthorised	School	0
	National comparative data	1.0

Exclusions

Number of exclusions of pupils of statutory school age during the previous year:

	Girls	Boys	Total

Fixed Period	4	5	9
Permanent	0	0	0
Total	4	5	9

Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is:

	%
Very good or better	16
Satisfactory or better	75
Less than satisfactory	25

EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL

Attainment and progress

21. In speaking and listening in English, the standards of pupils whose first language is English are generally good. Such pupils discuss issues confidently, and can explain a point of view and justify it. The school's meetings and tribunal provide a splendid opportunity for pupils to develop such skills. However, the spoken English of those for whom it is not the first language is very variable, depending both on the length of time they have studied it and the extent to which they have attended lessons. Reading standards are good at Key Stage 4: older pupils read fluently and with understanding. Pupils are less successful at lower key stages and achievement is far too variable at Key Stage 2; overall, pupils do not read enough. Reading in English by pupils for whom English is an additional language is limited to their course books, though some enjoy reading books in their own languages.

22. Standards of writing are generally well below national expectations at all ages and are unacceptably low at Key Stage 2, where the work seen in lessons resembled that of much younger children. Pupils do not structure their work well, nor do they develop written fluency. Spelling and handwriting are often poor. There is little completed written work in evidence and extended writing is rare. Presentation of work is poor. Judged by evidence of pupils' written work, when compared with standards of speaking and listening and reading, many pupils are capable of attaining much higher written standards than they do, and while progress in speaking and listening is good, progress in reading below Key Stage 4 and in writing throughout the school are poor.

23. Attainment and progress in mathematics are at the mercy of the erratic patterns of attendance. Those pupils who regularly come to classes achieve high and often very high standards for their age. These pupils engage in dialogue with their teacher so that they have considerable opportunity to control the pace of the lesson. Their understanding of processes is good, and they ask many pertinent questions. Some work in algebra is very good. Pupils taking an AS-level course were able to select and manipulate a variety of equations to solve problems associated with projectiles. Pupils in Key Stage 3 were able to find the roots of an equation by trial and improvement methods, and made rapid progress once they were shown how the use of a computer spreadsheet could assist their thinking. Some slower, but conscientious pupils were able to solve simple linear equations and inequalities, and older pupils could apply the principles of trigonometry to finding angles and lengths in plane figures.

24. However, many pupils attend lessons irregularly and are held back by serious gaps in their background knowledge and understanding. Basic numeracy is often weak: many do not know their number bonds and consequently do not recognise patterns. Some rely far too heavily on calculators for basic computation. Several have not learned the technical vocabulary associated, for example, with circles, and their progress with work on surface areas and volumes is slow.

25. In the youngest class there is no planned weekly programme of work and several pupils have poor levels of mathematical understanding. Pupils attend classes on a 'drop-in' basis and their progress is spasmodic and random. The majority do not make the progress expected for pupils of similar age nationally.

26. In Key Stage 3 and beyond pupils 'sign up' for the classes they wish to attend. Some do not sign up for a year or two and even where pupils do sign-up there is no guarantee that they will attend. For the great majority, attendance is poor, mathematical education is fragmented and piecemeal, and they do not make the progress of which they are capable.

27. Attainment in science in Key Stage 2 is well below national expectations, experience is fragmented to the detriment of steady progress; the scant amount of work in the subject at this key stage is an indication of wholly inadequate coverage. At Key Stages 3 and 4, pupils attending classes often display sound levels of scientific knowledge and understanding while a few show high levels of scientific understanding in the topics studied. However, sporadic attendance leaves many with significant weaknesses in their subject knowledge. There is insufficient opportunity for the systematic development of pupils' practical and investigative skills, so that most pupils make unsatisfactory progress in these respects. Attainment in history and geography was satisfactory within the lessons, but pupils made little progress except for those who attended GCSE classes regularly. Progress in art is patchy and matches attainment.

28. Pupils with learning difficulties make unsatisfactory progress and their achievement is low. No clear individual programmes are provided to support the pupils and targets are not set. Monitoring of progress is inhibited by the school's philosophical attitude to assessment, and continuity is difficult to provide because attendance at lessons is unpredictable. Progress is also affected by the adults' lack of understanding of some pupils' specific learning difficulties.

29. Overall, instruction is not suitable or efficient as required by the Education Act 1996.

Attitudes, behaviour and personal development

30. Pupils of different ages and nationalities generally get on well together. There is, however, occasional friction and hostility and reports of harassment, bullying and petty theft from some pupils. The meetings and tribunal provide valuable opportunities for problems of this kind to be brought out into the open and resolved. At the same time staff are duly alert to the danger in these forums of public humiliation and the potential for collective bullying of particular individuals. The Japanese pupils in the school are, as a group, less well integrated than others though steps have recently been taken to enable their concerns to be addressed properly in the public meetings.

31. Relationships between pupils and adults in the school are good. There is a relaxed atmosphere, staff are very approachable and pupils feel well supported. Staff are generous with their time and at a personal level know the pupils well. However, some of the physical contact between staff and pupils could be misconstrued and as such is ill-advised.

32. Pupils behave well both within classes and about the school. They respond positively to the school's ethos of self-regulation and self-control and generally respect the privacy of others in the boarding accommodation. There is, however, evidence of mistreatment of the fabric of the buildings in some areas. Pupil exclusions are reported to be rare but they have been high this year: recent incidents were related to consumption of alcoholic drinks.

33. The school accepts the widespread use by both staff and pupils of crude language that many people would find offensive, though it is a school rule that adults or children should not swear in front of visitors. There is at times gratuitous use of such language which goes completely unchecked by staff.

34. While a small minority of pupils have a positive commitment to academic learning and take their studies very seriously, the majority are more ambivalent in their attitudes. They fail to sustain regular attendance at classes and their efforts are at best, sporadic. Staff do not generally regard it as part of their role to encourage positive attitudes to learning, fearing that this would be perceived by pupils as interfering with their freedom not to attend lessons. Several pupils fail to develop positive attitudes towards study.

35. Where the teaching is particularly stimulating and demanding of pupils, as in some German and English as an additional language lessons, good attitudes to learning are promoted. Similarly high expectations should be adopted by all staff.

36. In spite of the school's ethos of self-regulated learning, sustained individual study is neither well developed nor well supported and pupils' study skills are generally poor. Pupils are therefore doubly disadvantaged in relation to their academic study.

37. The pupils with learning difficulties are independent and able to make choices within the confines of the curriculum. The climate does not encourage regular attendance in lessons and leads to pupils with learning difficulties missing regular teaching in basic skills. This results in a low level of interest, especially among the younger children at Key Stages 2 and 3. The majority of pupils with SEN are articulate and confident when speaking with adults. The poor attitudes to learning and failure to address or even recognise the issue is a major cause of the school's failure to provide efficient and suitable instruction.

Attendance

38. The "day kids' register" only records attendance for the morning session and does not match the requirements of the regulations. While attendance at school is satisfactory, attendance in lessons varied during the inspection from 0-125 per cent (ie more pupils than on the class list), with a mean of just less than a third of pupils present. This level is very similar to that recorded by teachers for mathematics lessons during the autumn 1998 term. Attendance improves close to the GCSE examination, but even in these classes it is poor. There is also evidence that some pupils visit lessons, but do not stay and settle to work.

39. Attendance in lessons by pupils with learning difficulties is poor. Where teachers have recorded attendance in lessons it shows figures such as seven lessons out of 17, four lessons out of 24. The pupils are able to sign up for those subjects they feel will interest them. Without adult guidance about the appropriateness of their choice, it can result in no work in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. The number of exclusions (nine) is high for a school of this size.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED

Teaching

40. The quality of teaching is extremely uneven. Teaching was satisfactory or better in 75 per cent of lessons, but was good or very good in only in 16 per cent; in a quarter of lessons, teaching was poor. Unsatisfactory lessons were more common at Key Stages 2 and 3.

41. Some of the teaching of English and English as an additional language has good qualities. The best work is carefully planned with a range of strategies, including discussion, appropriate for the needs of individual pupils. In such lessons, pupils are challenged, and extended to use English with accuracy and clear pronunciation. Pupils listened carefully and enlarged their vocabulary. The teacher kept records of pupils progress and the language points they had mastered. Most teaching was weaker than this, being poorly planned, containing insufficiently precise and accurate use of language and with the teacher keeping no effective record of pupils' progress. There is little sign of coherence either in the documentation or, more importantly, in the work seen in pupils' folders which are disorganised and contain unfinished, superficial fragments. In most of the English teaching, the quality of marking is poor. There is no formal assessment of pupils' attainment and progress.

42. In mathematics, the majority of the teaching is good or very good. For classes from Year 9 upwards, the planning of work is very good. Every course has a structured outline, which is normally communicated to pupils at the beginning of each term. Pupils know in advance what mathematics they are expected to cover (or are likely to miss by absence). However, the teaching of mathematics to younger pupils is unsatisfactory. It is insufficiently planned, unsystematic and operates only when a pupil 'drops-in' and shows an interest.

43. Few teachers have a strategy to cope with pupils' varying levels of attendance, but in history and geography there has been an attempt to construct a system of modules of supported self study, giving pupils a third option between attending lessons and not studying. There is little marking or assessment and therefore little planning or help, teachers negotiate individual learning plans with their pupils.

44. The school does not identify any child as having special educational needs. The lack of any formal assessment is a disadvantage, as many pupils have specific learning difficulties which are neither identified nor addressed. The pupils listed on the "special attention" list are reviewed on a termly basis, but their learning difficulties are not the main priority.

45. There is no named teacher with responsibility for pupils with learning difficulties since all claim a responsibility. No teacher has a qualification in special educational needs. Expectations of pupils with learning difficulties are generally low and the range of teaching strategies is very limited. Consequently the pupils with learning difficulties have unmet needs.

The curriculum and assessment

46. The curricular provision for pupils at all key stages is neither broad nor balanced. There is no planned continuity. At Key Stage 2 pupils visit the classroom but do not attend for sustained teaching in the core or other foundation subjects. At Key Stages 3 and 4, there is more emphasis on the core subjects and other subjects which will be entered for GCSE, but erratic attendance affects curriculum coverage.

47. There are few schemes of work or guidelines to make clear how the subject might be taught or how progression might be planned. The school has policy documents or schemes of work for some subjects but not others. Given that staff turnover is high and some teachers are inexperienced, newly qualified, or have trained in other countries, there is a pressing need to ensure much greater continuity and progression for the curriculum and pupils' learning.

48. There is no systematic plan for curriculum review over time. The pursuit of high academic achievement and improved rates of pupils' progress are not regarded as priorities by the principal and staff. They believe that individual pupils should be free to decide their own goals or aims, which may not include high standards of achievement or good progress. If they do, teachers will respond and support them; if not, the school believes that other personal goals are equally valid.

49. Teachers do not have an accurate picture of reading or of mathematical attainment. For mathematics, a record of pupil progress is maintained and this is used

well to write end of term summaries for each pupil. The records provide summative assessments, and are used for curricular planning of future work. However, although pupils present in classes receive instant feedback on the quality or accuracy of the work they have produced, they have little knowledge of its standard against national norms. Pupils are not prepared for the pressure of formal external examinations, nor yet for non-calculator papers. National Curriculum tests are not used formally but some questions are used as part of everyday teaching and learning. Across the curriculum, the lack of assessment makes planning to meet individual special needs difficult.

50. The school does not monitor academic progress or assess or record their personal and social development. Attendance at lessons is generally recorded and behaviour is monitored by the school community including the staff.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

51. The participation by all pupils in the democratic running of the school has a strong impact on moral and social education. Pupils' confidence is improved. The tribunal in particular contributes strongly to pupils' moral education. The opportunity to run shops and cafes contributes equally strongly to their social education, as well as offering some limited vocational and business experience.

52. Pupils with learning difficulties play a full part in the community. They meet on equal terms with their peers at the school meetings which determine the rules which all are expected to respect. There is little evidence to suggest that cultural diversity is seen as a strength of the school, or that cultural diversity is celebrated except in some humanities lessons where Japanese history and culture are studied and discussed. Trips to the British Museum have been of great benefit to some work in humanities lessons. Private instrumental music lessons taken by many pupils make a strong impact on the cultural life of the school.

53. All school staff have attended the training provided by Suffolk social services on child protection. The proprietor is the nominated person for child protection. Clear guidelines for staff are available in the staff handbook. Nevertheless supervision is inadequate in two important respects. First the pupils who do not attend lessons, and secondly the senior pupils in their night time accommodation, are unsupervised. The security of the site and particularly of pupils' residential accommodation does not match modern requirements or expectations.

Partnerships with parents and the community

54. Given the unique nature of the school it is not surprising that parents who choose to place their children in its care are strongly supportive of its values and philosophy. A number of parents travelled many miles, some even flying from Germany, to attend the meeting with HMI. Most parents who responded to the questionnaire are strongly assertive of the beneficial effects of the school on their childrens' character and confidence.

55. How well parents are informed about pupils' progress and attainment, however, is uncertain because the reporting system is geared to pupils passing on the variable content of school reports.

56. Parents do not therefore receive regular information about pupils' progress and are unlikely to be aware of the true standards of attainment, levels of special educational need, or the lack of skilled intervention.

Leadership and management

57. The unusual nature of the school, as a self-governing democratic school, precludes the usual hierarchial structures of devolved responsibility. In consequence, the school has evolved systems for organising and maintaining day-to-day matters.

58. The principal gives strong leadership with regard to the philosophy, ethos and value system of the school. Her role is best described as the guardian of the founding principles and the primary means of the transmission of the school's culture. All authority resides with the principal: decisions concerning finance, staffing, admission, and exclusion of pupils are taken directly by her. In addition, she retains the right of veto on all curriculum matters. The community, which comprises staff and pupils, has a clear and continuing role in decision-making regarding the routine organisation and administration of the school.

59. The principal takes no lead in curriculum management and does not perceive this to be part of her function. This presents a major difficulty because no authority or responsibility for leading this work is clearly devolved to anyone else. In consequence, curriculum development is haphazard and disjointed, dependent on the initiative of teachers individually or collectively, or on the expressed wish of students for some change to meet their needs or preferences. However, when changes are proposed, they are seriously considered and widely consulted on before a decision is taken.

60. The requirement from the DfEE following the previous inspection for the school to produce an action plan has led to some constructive discussion. When HMI visited the school in 1998, they noted some promising early developments in relation to assessment, record keeping and peer support. However, there has been only very limited implementation of these plans and the constant revision, for example in the draft assessment policy, is likely to undermine further progress. More seriously, despite the Action Plan, it remains clear that there are major areas of unresolved difficulty where the school's philosophy is in conflict with wider external expectations of pupils' levels of achievement and progress. The most serious difficulty for the school is that it does not agree that identified weaknesses in its provision are weaknesses: such judgements are seen as external impositions at odds with the school's beliefs and values. The principal and staff do not acknowledge the need to monitor or to evaluate teaching or the curriculum because they do not see it as their responsibility to improve pupils' attainment. The result is that only a small minority of pupils receive education that is good or satisfactory. For the great majority, their education is fragmented, disjointed and likely to adversely affect their future options. Quite how the school reconciles such high levels of under-achievement, together with a high proportion of unsatisfactory teaching, with the democratic principles it purports

to promote is very difficult to understand. In other words, the approach seems to entrench weaknesses in teaching and learning which sell pupils short rather than prepare them fully for living in a democratic society.

61. The aims of Summerhill are constantly made explicit and clarified by and for pupils and staff. Structures for information and decision making such as the weekly meeting and tribunal provide effective forums for safeguarding the rights of most members of the community to express an opinion, listen to other views and to vote for their preferences. For some EAL students, though, non-attendance at lessons disenfranchises them, because they do not have the language skills to participate effectively in the meetings.

62. The democratic ethos of the school, its philosophy and values, put it in a very strong position to claim to meet many of the aims of education for citizenship and the teaching of democracy in schools. But the academic aspects of the curriculum do not in any way reach the same standard. Crucially, its aims do not include commitment to ensuring that pupils achieve appropriately high standards or make good progress: these issues at the heart of education, are left to the individual pupils, who by non-attendance at lessons, are able to disadvantage themselves. This places an unacceptable burden of responsibility on these pupils, who are faced with making choices based on incomplete and inadequate information rather than being the professional responsibility of the school.

Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

63. The overall numbers of teaching and non-teaching staff are satisfactory. The necessary checks have been made on all staff except for one part time peripatetic music teacher. These checks must be made urgently. Turnover of staff is high and has consequences for continuity in planning and developments. Of the ten teachers, none has been in the school for more than four years, three teachers joined approximately six months ago and the current average length of service is about two years. Seven out of ten teachers have a teaching qualification and the match with initial qualifications and subject taught in the majority of cases is good. No member of the staff has any qualification in special educational needs, which is a disadvantage. Currently only those staff employed as house parents have a job description. This outlines responsibilities, which include "...the physical and social well being of the children... to maintain an awareness of the emotional problems... particularly for new pupils". However, the whole school community share in these responsibilities.

64. Helpful induction is provided for staff new to the school. As well as oversight by the principal, other persons are identified to provide a supportive link. No monitoring of the quality of teaching is undertaken by the principal, who does not see this as part of her role. Peer review began recently, whereby teachers pair with a colleague and visit each others' lessons. Subsequent discussion provides mutual support rather than rigorous critical analysis of teaching methodology.

65. The staff handbook states in-service training is encouraged and most staff have undertaken courses relevant either to the subjects they teach, or on more general matters, such as child protection. Sensibly there is a requirement to write an evaluation report after each course. A member of staff acts as a 'teachers' support' to

help facilitate discussion about the curriculum and action plan within the parameters of the philosophy of the school. This has potential for coordinating development and related further training.

66. The accommodation generally supports education effectively; it comprises a main school building supplemented by a variety of other nearby buildings located in the grounds of the house, some of a demountable type, a few of which are currently not in use. Site security is at a minimum level and lighting at night is poor on the main drive, a worrying feature in view of the freedom allowed to pupils to move about on and off the site. There is some uncertainty relating to the route traffic should take on entering and leaving the grounds.

67. Health and safety in teaching areas are in most respects properly safeguarded. However, fire extinguishers in the science area need to be secured and once the school begins to use its pottery kiln, it will be important to ensure that no pupils go near it while it is hot. Art accommodation is adequate in size, but many of the work surfaces are uneven and are not clean and, there is not enough variety of lighting conditions. The woodwork room should have its dust efficiently removed each day. Both the art room and woodwork areas are suitable and accessible to pupils.

68. Although classroom sizes are generally adequate for the numbers of pupils present in lessons, and rooms are warm and adequately lit, the space for pupils in Class 2 is very cramped and could become overcrowded were all the pupils to turn up for a lesson. There is limited clean working space in the art room, and the dark room is not well organised. The school library is inconveniently located at one end of a classroom; it is poorly resourced and pupils rarely use it especially as library books have been dispersed to the appropriate specialist teaching areas. The pupil workroom is an important facility with four computers that are heavily used; during the inspection the room was however seen to be not respected by some pupils as a place for quieter study. Furniture in the school is generally adequate and serviceable.

69. Much remains to be done if the boarding accommodation is to be brought up to an acceptable standard. The school has made very slow progress, if any, on recommendations from previous inspections both by HMI and Suffolk social services.

70. In contrast to that of the girls, the boys' accommodation is very basic. Beds and bunks are generally of a sturdy wooden construction with ample space for storage and always a lockable cupboard. Rooms are improved by the use of furniture often made by pupils past and present. Most pupils have personalised their accommodation to some degree, sometimes attractively. Although linen is washed regularly, some of the blankets and duvet covers were very grubby. A number of spotlights were without bulbs.

71. There have been some improvements in the provision of toilets, baths and showers in the main building but other sanitary facilities are often shabby and in need of repair or replacement. The fact that some repairs have not been done indicates that regular monitoring is not carried out or acted upon. Defects such as crumbling plasterwork around doorframes and washbasins, a lack of towel rails in bedrooms, the absence of hand drying facilities near to washbasins, several broken toilet seats, two broken toilet cisterns with no chain pulls, a toilet door which cannot be locked from

the inside, linoleum and other floor covering which is badly cracked and holed, defective tiling and a shower that does not work, are all cases in point.

72. Some practices, such as hanging a metal coat-hanger from a live cable attached to the ceiling, and an electric kettle lead trailed across a doorway are clearly unsafe and should be stopped immediately; both are symptomatic of the lack of adequate supervision in the senior boys' accommodation.

73. The school's philosophy, which allows the shared use of toilets by boys, girls and staff, contravenes Children Act 1989 guidance and the recommendations of the last social services report in 1997. The security of the site, however, and health and safety monitoring are issues of the most serious immediate concern. Levels of supervision and the absence of any residential adult in senior pupils' accommodation areas are also worrying features. This is exacerbated since site security is weak and some ground floor bedroom windows have only broken or missing window catches and no security locks; there are serious concerns about boarders' safety.

74. There are sufficient basic resources, textbooks, consumable materials and practical equipment, to support learning in the subjects offered. However, in some subjects, for example history and geography, if all pupils who could attend did so at any one time, resources would be stretched. No system of capitation operates but resources are allocated to staff to purchase items, as and when required; this appears to work satisfactorily. The four computers in the computer room, are well used by pupils for educational simulations, e-mail and internet access during afternoons and evenings. A booking system operates for part of the time but difficulties have been experienced with computers being misused by some pupils. Resolution of this problem is being sought by the community through the school meeting. A reasonable range of software including CD-ROM is available. Although well used in some lessons, for example in mathematics and information technology, wider use could be made to support pupils' work in other areas. Some teachers make much use of photocopied worksheets either produced by themselves or from commercial sources. Video is used appropriately in history, geography and science lessons.

75. The library, which is situated at the rear of the English room, is inadequate either to support pupils work or for their leisure time reading. There is no issuing system. Pupils do have the opportunity to use the local public library. Increasing the book stock and encouraging more pupils to use the school library could provide opportunities for improving literacy.

INSPECTION DATA

Summary of inspection evidence

76. The reporting inspection took place between 1-5 March 1999 and was carried out by eight of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools (HMI). Although all aspects of the school were inspected, there was specialist inspection for pupils in Key Stage 2, for pupils with Special Educational Needs and for mathematics, English, science, information technology, geography, art and woodwork. Fifty-five lessons were

observed, either wholly or in part amounting to a total of 36 hours 40 minutes. HMI held discussions with the principal and other members of staff and all were seen teaching. HMI also saw the work available in English, mathematics and science and a range of other subjects and talked with many of the children.

Data and indicators

Pupil data

Year Group	Girls	Boys	Total
5	3	1	4
6	0	3	3
7	1	7	8
8	4	4	8
9	6	8	14
10	4	5	9
11	2	3	5
12	2	3	5
13	0	0	0
Total	22	34	56

Teachers and classes

Number of teachers	Full-time		Part-time	
Total: 10	Female: 3	Male:5	Female: 1	Male:1
FTE teachers	FTE pupils		Pupil : teacher ratio	
8.5	55		6.47 : 1	

Average teaching group size

KS2: 13

KS3: 10
KS4: 10
Sixth form: 3

Public funding

None of the pupils are supported by public funding.

PARENTAL SURVEY

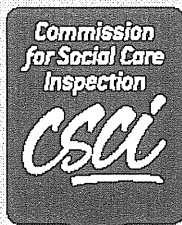
Number of questionnaires sent:	55
Number of questionnaires returned:	39
Percentage return rate:	70.9

Responses (percentage of answers in each category):

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel the school encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the school	13.3	20.0	53.3	13.3	0
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my children)	86.7	6.7	0	0	0
The school handles complaints from parents well	40.0	20.0	33.3	0	0
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	50	13.3	33.3	0	0
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	30.7	23.1	46.2	0	0
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	57.1	21.4	21.4	0	0

The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	100	0	0	0	0
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	43.0	7.1	49.9	0	0
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	100	0	0	0	0
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	77.0	15.4	7.6	0	0
My child(ren) like(s) school	92.3	7.7	0	0	0

It should be recorded that a high percentage of parents considered that the questionnaire asked questions which they felt did not relate to Summerhill; for example, some parents recorded that they were happy that the school did not expect them to play an active life in the school.



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

Boarding School

Summerhill School

Westward Ho

Leiston

Suffolk

IP16 4HY

25th January 2005

Commission for Social Care Inspection

Launched in April 2004, the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) is the single inspectorate for social care in England.

The Commission combines the work formerly done by the Social Services Inspectorate (SSI), the SSI/Audit Commission Joint Review Team and the National Care Standards Commission.

The role of CSCI is to:

- Promote improvement in social care
- Inspect all social care - for adults and children - in the public, private and voluntary sectors
- Publish annual reports to Parliament on the performance of social care and on the state of the social care market
- Inspect and assess 'Value for Money' of council social services
- Hold performance statistics on social care
- Publish the 'star ratings' for council social services
- Register and inspect services against national standards
- Host the Children's Rights Director role.

Inspection Methods & Findings

SECTION B of this report summarises key findings and evidence from this inspection. The following 4-point scale is used to indicate the extent to which standards have been met or not met by placing the assessed level alongside the phrase "Standard met?"

The 4-point scale ranges from:

- 4 - Standard Exceeded (Commendable)
- 3 - Standard Met (No Shortfalls)
- 2 - Standard Almost Met (Minor Shortfalls)
- 1 - Standard Not Met (Major Shortfalls)

'O' or blank in the 'Standard met?' box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion.

'9' in the 'Standard met?' box denotes standard not applicable.

'X' is used where a percentage value or numerical value is not applicable.

SCHOOL INFORMATION

Name of School

Summerhill School

Address

Westward Ho, Leiston, Suffolk, IP16 4HY

Tel No:

01728 830540

Fax No:

01728 830540

Email Address
Name of Governing body, Person or Authority responsible for the school

Summerhill School

Name of Head

Zoe Readhead

CSCI Classification

Boarding School

Type of school

Boarding School

Date of last boarding welfare inspection

24/05/01

Date of Inspection Visit		25th January 2004	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		02:00 pm	
Name of CSCI Inspector	1	Joe Staines	077511
Name of CSCI Inspector	2	Anna Rogers	
Name of CSCI Inspector	3		
Name of CSCI Inspector	4		
Name of Boarding Sector Specialist Inspector (if applicable):			
Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable) Lay assessors are members of the public independent of the CSCI. They accompany inspectors on some inspections and bring a different perspective to the inspection process.			
Was this inspection conducted alongside an ISI or OfSTED inspection as part of a Joint Whole School Inspection?			NO
Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection		Zoe Readhead (Principal)	

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Inspection visits

Brief Description of the school and Boarding Provision

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Conclusions and overview of findings on Boarding Welfare

Notifications to Local Education Authority or Secretary of State

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Inspection Methods Used

- 1. Welfare Policies and Procedures**
- 2. Organisation and Management**
- 3. Welfare Support to Boarders**
- 4. Staffing**
- 5. Premises**

Part C: Lay Assessor's Summary (where applicable)

Part D: Head's Response

D.1. Comments

D.2. Action Plan Status

D.3. Agreement

INTRODUCTION TO REPORT AND INSPECTION

Boarding schools are subject to inspection by the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) to determine whether the welfare of children (ie those aged under 18) is adequately safeguarded and promoted while they are accommodated by the school.

Inspections assess the extent to which the school is meeting the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools, published by the Secretary of State under Section 87C of the Children Act 1989, and other relevant requirements of the Children Act 1989 as amended.

Inspections are carried out by the CSCI, and in most cases the inspection team includes a specialist in boarding provision working, or with experience of working, in the boarding sector. Boarding welfare inspections by CSCI may also be carried out in conjunction with a full inspection of the school by the Independent Schools Inspectorate or OfSTED, so that the two inspections together constitute a Joint Whole School Inspection of the school. In such cases, a joint summary of main findings and recommendations from both inspections will also be available.

This document summarises the inspection findings of the CSCI in respect of Summerhill School.

The report follows the format of the National Minimum Standards and the numbering shown in the report corresponds to that of the standards.

The report will show the following:

- Inspection methods used
- Key findings and evidence
- Overall ratings in relation to the standards
- Recommended Action by the school
- Advisory recommendations on boarding welfare
- Summary of the findings
- Report of the lay assessor (where relevant)
- The Head's response and proposed action plan to address findings

INSPECTION VISITS

Inspections are undertaken in line with the agreed regulatory framework under the Care Standards Act 2000 and the Children Act 1989 as amended, with additional visits as required.

The report represents the inspector's findings from the evidence found at the specified inspection dates.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SERVICES PROVIDED.

Summerhill is an independent school providing boarding and day facilities for pupils between the ages of about 7 and 17 years. It is situated in the small market town of Leiston within walking distance of the town centre. The site extends to about 12 acres and consists of a main house and a number of permanent outbuildings. There are also a number of mobile homes scattered around the campus in which some staff have their quarters. The school has a playing field, a camping area, a small wood and a garden area. The school has its own swimming pool. The driveways are tarmaced throughout the campus and provide smooth, level areas for moving around the campus. The boarding accommodation was provided in 5 areas, separated by age and/or gender, with a houseparent allocated to each, except that for the oldest boarders, who are supported by two identified houseparents, who undertake this role in addition to their other duties in relation to their house.

At the time of the inspection a total of 81 children were on roll, 74 boarders and 7 day children. The school's policy is to resist admitting any child after 12 years old. The school does not cater for 'weekly boarders'. The school makes no guardian arrangements and no lodgings are arranged. Mrs Readhead confirmed that every child goes home during the longer holidays. The school does not close during half term breaks.

The school is now 80 years old and has been in its present position for the majority of that time. The school has an 'alternative' stance to children's education. Founded by A.S.Neill, it strongly adheres to the principle that children should be given the opportunity to decide for themselves how to spend their time at the school. Mrs Readhead, Neill's daughter and the school's current Principal, fiercely guards her father's philosophy. The school has produced a general policy statement, identifying 5 key principles underlying the philosophy of the school. They are:

- 1) To provide choices and opportunities that allow children to develop at their own pace and to follow their own interests.
- 2) To allow children to be free from compulsory or imposed assessment, allowing them to develop their own goals and sense of achievement.
- 3) To allow children to be completely free to play as much as they like.
- 4) To allow children to experience the full range of feelings free from the judgement and intervention of an adult.
- 5) To allow children to live in a community that supports them and that they are responsible for; in which they have the freedom to be themselves, and have the power to change community life, through the democratic process.

The school meetings are used to create, confirm and amend all of the school 'laws', which form the structure of expectations the community has of itself, including all members of the school, regardless of age or position.

PART A SUMMARY OF INSPECTION FINDINGS

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL IN BOARDING WELFARE

Feedback from older boarders clearly indicated that, whilst the freedom afforded them by the ethos of the school was not always easy, the overall view was that their experiences at Summerhill were helping them to develop into mature, responsible young adults. All of the boarders spoken to stated that they felt happy and safe. The overall reported levels of satisfaction from boarders about life at Summerhill were very high. Examples were seen of genuine involvement by boarders in the day to day life at the school. There was no doubt in the inspector's minds that the boarders were able to contribute fully to all matters affecting them. There were a number of different ways that boarders could be involved in committees and areas of responsibility, the evidence of observations throughout the inspection was that the boarders undertook their tasks with a sense of responsibility, and ensured that younger boarders were supported and involved in the school. The feedback from boarders about bullying was consistently positive, both in terms of the results of the boarders' survey, and in the verbal comments made to inspectors during the inspection. The evidence obtained during the inspection confirmed that bullying levels were low, and boarders of all ages were equally involved with each other in recreational activities. Feedback from parents was generally positive, including comments such as "we would not send our children to any other boarding school in Great-Britain", even if we would get paid for doing so" and, "Both boys are extremely happy at Summerhill and would not even countenance the idea of attending any other boarding school". One negative comment was made, and is referred to below.

WHAT THE SCHOOL SHOULD DO BETTER IN BOARDING WELFARE

The school accepted that it was run in a different way to most schools, and as a result, found alternative ways of achieving some of the outcomes identified in the National Minimum Standards than those used at other schools. Whilst the inspection did confirm that the majority of outcomes were being achieved, and the National Minimum Standards met, there was a need for the school to evidence the ways in which the school addresses areas where it's philosophy does not, or cannot enable it to meet the standards in the way usually expected. The main example of this is in relation to internet access. The principal clearly stated that the measures, restricting access to unsuitable material, used in many schools, would not be accepted by the school through it's democratic process. The principal was of the view that the school's system of self determination and encouraging all children to feel safe enough to speak out about any concerns, offered adequate protection from unsuitable material on the internet, and indeed, there were several laws relating to accessing adult or pornographic material. This is in conjunction with a clear statement in the parents handbook, explaining the school's policy on internet usage, which all parents of boarders have access to. The inspectors were of the view that the school should produce a written risk assessment regarding this issue, determining the potential risks, the measures needed to ensure the risk was minimised, and putting into practice, any resultant safeguards. The inspectors made the school aware that the issues of concern were not wholly centred on access to adult material, but from the potential harm of unregulated access to internet "chatrooms".

Other minor shortfalls identified in this inspection related to the school's written policies which in some cases needed expanding upon, risk assessments in relation to school trips, the recruitment records held by the school, training in food hygiene and health & safety, and some environmental issues. These issues were not felt to be difficult to rectify.

Of the responses received from parents, one particular concern was made, and passed on to the school during the inspection. One parent made it clear that they felt they should be more involved in the school, and were of the view that the school marginalised the views of parents.

CONCLUSIONS AND OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS ON BOARDING WELFARE

The staff and boarders of Summerhill were helpful and open with the inspectors throughout the three days of the inspection. There was clear evidence that the welfare of boarders was being promoted. The philosophy of the school enabled a number of pupils to experience the pressure of responsibility, both in terms of decision making, through the school meetings, and in the undertaking of roles with a variety of responsibilities attached. Older boarders were seen helping, supporting and engaging with younger boarders, and visa versa. The feedback from staff was that the care provided to pupils was good, that communication between the staff team was effective, and that the pupil's needs in terms of welfare were being met. There was no evidence of boarders rejecting, or finding it difficult to adhere to the expectations of the school in terms of behaviour, as they had been involved in deciding upon those expectations. The staff team were well supported by the principal and senior staff, who all had a very "hands on" approach to working at the school. The principal and other members of senior staff were frequently seen engaging in activities and discussions with boarders, and fellow members of staff on a variety of subjects.

NOTIFICATIONS TO LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITY OR SECRETARY OF STATE

NO

NO

NO

The grounds for any Notification to be made are:
NA

NA

IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDED ACTIONS FROM LAST INSPECTION					

NO

If No, the findings of this inspection on any Recommended Actions not implemented are listed below:

No	Standard*	Recommended Actions	
1	BS11	<p>Strenuous efforts should be made to ensure that pupils are protected from unsuitable material available on the internet.</p> <p>(A new recommendation was made in respect of this)</p>	

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS IDENTIFIED FROM THIS INSPECTION

Action Plan: The Head is requested to provide the Commission with an Action Plan, which indicates how Recommended Action are to be addressed. This action plan will be made available on request to the Area Office.

RECOMMENDED ACTION			
Identified below are the actions recommended on issues addressed in the main body of the report in order to safeguard and promote the welfare of boarders adequately in accordance with the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools. The references below are to the relevant Standards. Non-implementation of recommended action can lead to future statutory notification of failure to safeguard and promote welfare.			
No	Standard*	Recommended Action	
1	BS5	The school should amend the complaints information provided to parents and boarders, to include the details of the Commission for Social Care Inspection.	July 1 st 2005
2	BS5	The school should produce a means of recording any serious complaints made about the school.	July 1 st 2005
3	BS11	The school should produce a written risk assessment for the use of the internet, and produce a protocol, enabling the school to monitor the sites accessed by pupils via the schools computers.	May 1 st 2005
4	BS15	The school should ensure that records are maintained in boarder's files, of written parental permission for the administration of first aid and appropriate non-prescription medication, or to seek medical, dental or optical treatment when required.	July 1 st 2005
5	BS24	The school should ensure that all staff involved in the preparation of food undertake food hygiene training every 3 years	July 1 st 2005
6	BS29	The school should produce a written risk assessment form, for completion in respect of school trips.	July 1 st 2005
7	BS34	The school should ensure that staff attend ongoing training in areas such as health & safety, to keep up to date with current guidance in this area.	July 1 st 2005
8	BS35	The school should produce guidance for staff who may be suspended, pending investigation of allegations of abuse, detailing the support the school would offer in such a case.	July 1 st 2005

9	BS38	The school should ensure that satisfactory enhanced CRB certificates, are obtained in respect of all staff. Where staff have come directly from abroad, the equivalent clearance should also be sought, or whatever alternative that country can supply, in addition to the UK CRB certificate,	July 1 st 2005
10	BS41	The school should ensure that suitable security measures are in place to prevent unauthorised access by the public to boarding houses.	July 1 st 2005
11	BS44	The school should ensure that toilet doors are fitted with locks which are openable from the outside in an emergency.	July 1 st 2005

ADVISORY RECOMMENDATIONS

Identified below are advisory recommendations on welfare matters addressed in the main body of the report and based on the National Minimum Standards, made for consideration by the school.

No	Refer to Standard*	Recommendation
		None

*Note: You may refer to the relevant standard in the remainder of the report by omitting the 2-letter prefix. E.g. BS10 refers to Standard 10.

PART B**INSPECTION METHODS & FINDINGS**

The following Inspection Methods have been used in the production of this report.

Direct Observation	YES
Pupil guided tour of accommodation	YES
Pupil guided tour of Recreational Areas	YES

Checks with other Organisations and Individuals

• Social Services	YES
• Fire Service	YES
• Environmental Health	YES
• DfES	YES
• School Doctor	NA
• Independent Person or Counsellor	YES
• Chair of Governors	NA
'Tracking' individual welfare arrangements	YES
Group discussion with boarders	YES
Group interviews with House staff teams	YES
Group discussion with ancillary staff	YES
Group discussion with Gap students	NA
Individual interviews with key staff	YES
Boarders' survey	YES
Meals taken with pupils	YES
Early morning and late evening visits	YES
Invitation to parents to comment	YES
Inspection of policy / practice documents	YES
Inspection of Records	YES
Visit to Sanatorium	YES
Visits to lodgings	NO
Individual interviews with pupil(s)	YES

Date of Inspection	25/01/05
Time of Inspection	14:00
Duration of Inspection (hrs.)	70
Number of Inspector Days spent on site	6

Pre-inspection information and the Head's evaluative statement, provided by the school, have also been taken into account in preparing this report.

SCHOOL INFORMATION:**AGE RANGE OF BOARDING
PUPILS****FRO
M****7****TO****17****NUMBER OF BOARDERS (FULL TIME + WEEKLY) AT TIME OF INSPECTION:****Boys****35****Girls****39****Total****74****Number of separate Boarding Houses****4**

The following pages summarise the key findings and evidence from this inspection, together with the CSCI assessment of the extent to which standards have been met. The following 4-point scale is used to indicate the extent to which standards have been met or not met by placing the assessed level alongside the phrase "Standard met?"

The 4-point scale ranges from:

- | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------|
| 4 - Standard Exceeded | (Commendable) |
| 3 - Standard Met | (No Shortfalls) |
| 2 - Standard Almost Met | (Minor Shortfalls) |
| 1 - Standard Not Met | (Major Shortfalls) |

"0" in the "Standard met" box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion.

"9" in the "Standard met" box denotes standard not applicable.

"X" is used where a percentage value or numerical value is not applicable.

WELFARE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

- A suitable statement of the school's boarding principles and practice should be available to parents, boarders and staff.
- Boarders are protected from bullying.
- Boarders are protected from abuse.
- Use of discipline with boarders is fair and appropriate.
- Boarders' complaints are appropriately responded to.
- Boarders' health is promoted.
- Safeguarding and promoting boarders' health and welfare are supported by appropriate records.

Standard 1 (1.1 – 1.4)

A suitable statement of the school's boarding principles and practice should be available to parents, boarders and staff.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

This standard was assessed as met. The school have produced a coloured and illustrated brochure entitled "Imagine a School", containing a clear description of the school's philosophy and facilities. The document contains a number of quotes from pupils, describing life at the school. There were also a number of associated documents available to parents, staff and boarders, giving detailed information as set down in 1.2 of this standard.

Standard 2 (2.1 – 2.6)

The school should have an effective policy on countering bullying, which is known to parents, boarders and staff and which is implemented successfully in practice.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

This standard was assessed as met. The school had a clear statement as to how bullying would be responded to, which included being investigated by elected ombudsman, or by the whole community in it's community meetings.

The inspectors observed one of the school meetings, where an issue of potential bullying was raised. The boarders were clearly able to speak freely about what had happened, with no fear of reprisals, and a decision reached by the whole community, as to what the consequences should be.

During boarder discussions, both in formal and informal settings, Boarders stated clearly that they were not bullied, and that all episodes of bullying were dealt with in a much better way than they had experienced previously. One boarder stated that they had been bullied in a previous school, but were not at Summerhill.

Of the boarders surveyed, bullying was not identified as an issue.

PERCENTAGE OF PUPILS REPORTING NEVER OR HARDLY EVER BEING BULLIED

95

%

Standard 3 (3.1 – 3.9)

The school should have, and follow, an appropriate policy on child protection and response to allegations or suspicions of abuse, which is consistent with local Area Child Protection Committee procedures, and is known to staff and, as appropriate, to older boarders in positions of responsibility.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****3**

This standard was assessed as met. The school had arranged for formal child protection training to take place for all staff in November 2004, provided by local authority child protection training officers. The inspectors spoke with staff that attended. The responses given were consistently positive about the training.

The school has a clear child protection policy, which included all the information identified in the National Minimum Standards, and a copy of the local Area Child Protection Committee procedures. The principal, Zoe Readhead, was the school's nominated child protection liaison officer, and staff were aware of this.

No allegations of abuse had been received by the local authority or the Commission for Social Care Inspection since the last inspection.

Standard 4 (4.1 – 4.7)

The school should have, and follow, a fair and appropriate policy on behaviour, discipline and use of punishments, known to boarders, staff and parents.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****3**

This standard was assessed as met. The school had a number of opportunities for pupils to take on posts of responsibility, including ombudsman (responsible for acting as advocate in disputes, bringing issues to the community meeting to avoid acting in isolation), beddies officer (responsible for enforcing the "bedtime laws", which had been previously agreed by the whole community at a meeting). During the inspection, inspectors observed the bedtime routine in the younger boarders house, and noted that the beddies officers appeared to take their responsibilities seriously, and positively, ensuring that all the children were accounted for by the agreed time.

The school have a written list of the school "laws" voted on and agreed by the whole community at one of the regular meetings. At the time of the inspection, the laws covered 36 general areas, with detailed specific rules under a variety of themes. The consequences to breaches of the rules were clear, with a clear fining system, and other agreed responses to misdemeanours. All of the fines given were recorded in the minutes of community meetings. All of the boarders spoken to during the inspection stated that they felt the rules were fair. This was backed up by the results of the pupil survey, in which 100% of responses said that punishments were given out fairly.

Standard 5 (5.1 - 5.7) The school should have, and follow, an appropriate policy on responding to complaints from boarders and parents.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	2
This standard was assessed as not fully met. A minor shortfall was identified with the school's complaints procedure. There was a need for the information provided to parents and boarders, to include the details of the Commission for Social Care Inspection, should any complainant wish to access this organisation. There was information available to boarders in the telephone booth about a variety of external agencies, including childline, whom boarders could access if they felt they needed to. However, this needed to be updated to include reference to the Commission for Social Care Inspection, and not the previous welfare inspection agency. There was also a need for the school to develop a means of maintaining a written record, of serious complaints received by the school.		
Number of complaints, if any, received by CSCI about the school during last 12 months:		0

Standard 6 (6.1 - 6.3) The school should have, and follow, an appropriate policy on countering major risks to health, including substance abuse.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
This standard was assessed as met. The school had clear guidance in the school laws about smoking tobacco. Boarders confirmed in discussion groups, that the science teacher had covered health and sex education, and the issue of alcohol and drug misuse, within the curriculum. The inspectors saw evidence of literature being available in classrooms and recreational areas.		

Standard 7 (7.1 - 7.5) Adequate records should be kept in relation to individual boarders' health and welfare needs and issues.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
This standard was assessed as met. The files of boarders examined contained information on health and welfare issues.		

ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

- There is clear leadership of boarding in the school.
- Crises affecting boarders' welfare are effectively managed.
- The school's organisation of boarding contributes to boarders' welfare.
- Boarders have access to a range and choice of activities.
- Boarders are enabled to contribute to the operation of boarding in the school.
- The operation of any prefect system safeguards and promotes boarders' welfare.
- Boarders receive personal support from staff.

Standard 8 (8.1 - 8.3)

There should be clear management and leadership of the practice and development of boarding in the school.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
This standard was assessed as met. The school was privately owned, and therefore did not have a board of governors. There was a senior management team, consisting of the principal and senior members of staff. The principal, and some senior members of staff, had been boarders at the school themselves and as such, had immense experience of how the school operated. They were strong defenders of the school's philosophy and culture.		

Standard 9 (9.1 - 9.3)

The school should be capable of satisfactorily managing crises affecting boarders' welfare

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
This standard was assessed as met. Discussion with the principal confirmed that the school had a clear set of planned responses in the event of a crises affecting boarders welfare. Advice was given that putting the putting the plans down on paper would enhance the system.		

Standard 10 (10.1 - 10.5)

The organisation of boarding houses or units should operate satisfactorily and provide appropriate protection and separation of boarders by age and gender.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
This standard was assessed as met. There were individual accommodation areas, separated by the ages of those boarding in them. The quality of the boarding houses was found to be of a similar standard throughout. No adverse comments were made in relation to this standard.		

Standard 11 (11.1 - 11.6)

There should be an appropriate range and choice of activities for boarders outside teaching time.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

2

This standard was assessed as not fully met. Boarders had responsibility for organising their own free time. There were a number of facilities available to pupils to facilitate undertaking activities. During the inspection, boarders were observed engaging in an activity, pre-arranged and organised by pupils, such as a drawing game, which included participants from a wide age range. All those partaking were equally involved. Older boarders had also arranged their own board game in the "Jazz Café". A number of other boarders were seen participating in discussions with each other and staff in the staff room. There was a swimming pool at the school, which could only be used in accordance with the rules about supervision, agreed by the whole school at one of the community meetings.

The school had some rules about internet use, regarding the issue of viewing and making screen savers of adult material. However the school had not responded to the issue raised at the last inspection regarding the lack of safeguards for young people using the internet. It was noted by the inspectors that the school had made a clear statement in the information provided to parents of boarders that access to the internet is not restricted at the school. The principal reported that the school had been advised that protective software was easily overridden, and that the system the school had in place, of supervision by each other, and the promotion of individual responsibility was sufficient. Due to the potentially serious nature of this issue, further recommendations have been made that the school produce a written risk assessment for the use of the internet, and a protocol be produced enabling the school to monitor the sites accessed by pupils via the schools computers.

Standard 12 (12.1 - 12.2)

Boarders have opportunity to contribute views to the operation of boarding provision.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

4

This standard was assessed as met. The school's system of community meetings and equal involvement ensured that all boarders, of all ages, had their views listened to and fully respected. There were a number of committees and roles that anyone could be elected to by the whole school, such as end of term committee, health & safety committee, ombudsman, beddies officer, social committee, visitors committee, work fines supervisor, investigation committee, room committee and library committee. The fact that they were listened to, and were able to contribute equally to all aspects of the school was identified as one of the best things about Summerhill by a number of boarders spoken to during the inspection.

Standard 13 (13.1 - 13.7) Any prefect system (or equivalent) should give prefects (or equivalent) appropriate specific duties and responsibilities, with adequate staff supervision and measures to counter possible abuses of the role.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	4
This standard was assessed as exceeded. As stated previously in this report, a number of areas of responsibility were available for boarders to undertake, if they chose to. The responses from boarders about these roles was unanimously positive, both from those who undertook the tasks involved, who stated that it was rewarding and a useful part of their own development, and from other boarders, who confirmed that officers did not abuse their position.		

Standard 14 (14.1 - 14.6) Each boarder should have one or more members of staff to whom he or she can turn for personal guidance or with a personal problem.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
This standard was assessed as met. All boarders who spoke to the inspectors confirmed that every member of staff at the school could be approached equally, if the boarder had a problem they wished to discuss. The school also had an independent person, external to the school, who could be contacted if boarders chose to contact them.		

WELFARE SUPPORT TO BOARDERS

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

- Boarders receive first aid and health care as necessary.
- Boarders are adequately supervised and looked after when ill.
- Boarders are supported in relation to any health or personal problems.
- Boarders do not experience inappropriate discrimination.
- Boarders can maintain private contact with their parents and families.
- Boarders' possessions and money are protected.
- New boarders are introduced to the school's procedures and operation, and are enabled to settle in.
- Boarders' welfare is protected in any appointment of educational guardians by the school.
- Risk assessment and school record keeping contribute to boarders' welfare.
- Boarders receive good quality catering provision.
- Boarders have access to food and drinking water in addition to main meals.
- Boarders are protected from the risk of fire.
- Boarders' welfare is not compromised by unusual or onerous demands.
- The welfare of any children other than the school's pupils is safeguarded and promoted while accommodated by the school.
- Boarders' safety and welfare are protected during high-risk activities.
- Boarders have appropriate access to information and facilities outside the school.

Standard 15 (15.1 - 15.14)

Appropriate first aid and minor illness treatment are available to boarders at all times, with access to medical, dental and optical services as required.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

This standard was assessed as not fully met. The school had access to local GP's of both genders via the local surgery, which was situated close to the school, in Leiston. Detailed records were maintained in individual boarder's files regarding complementary medicines. The school had maintained at least two members of staff on duty who held 1st aid certificates. Discussion with staff and records confirmed that the school had a strict policy of refusing to accept medications brought back by boarders from home, without clear descriptions and records of prescription. No records were present in files of written parental permission for the administration of first aid and appropriate non-prescription medication to boarders, or to seek medical, dental or optical treatment when required, and a recommendation was made in respect of this. The National Minimum Standards also state that the school should secure, and follow, qualified medical or nursing advice in a written protocol on the provision of non-prescription 'household' medicines to boarders. A recommendation was made in respect of this.

Standard 16 (16.1 - 16.3)

Boarders who are ill should be regularly checked and adequately looked after by a member of staff, and be able to summon staff assistance readily and rapidly when necessary.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

This standard was assessed as met. The staff handbook contained a detailed policy on the monitoring of boarders who were unwell. Boarders confirmed that staff were readily available should they need to summon assistance when ill.

Standard 17 (17.1 - 17.8)

Significant health and personal problems of individual boarders should be identified and managed appropriately.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

This standard was assessed as met. The boarders' files examined contained information about the health and personal problems, where present, of individuals. The staff guidance included protocols for support to sick boarders, the administration of medicines, dealing with cuts and wounds, injuries, personal hygiene problems and infectious diseases.

Standard 18 (18.1 - 18.6)

Within the school, there is no inappropriate discrimination on grounds of gender, disability, race, religion, cultural background, linguistic background, sexual orientation, or academic or sporting ability. These factors are taken into account in the care of boarders, so that care is sensitive to different needs.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

This standard was assessed as met. The feedback from boarders confirmed that there was no discrimination of any sort at the school. Boarders reported that the variety of cultures represented by the boarder population at the school were all integrated and that the culture of the community was one of acceptance and equality, regardless of cultural background. The boarders who spoke to the inspectors were firm in their belief that any form of discrimination, or bullying, on the grounds of race or culture would not be tolerated, and would almost certainly result in the issue being brought up at one of the community meetings, with strong condemnation and possible sanction for anyone found guilty of perpetrating any such action, be they another boarder or a member of staff.

Standard 19 (19.1 - 19.6)

Boarders are enabled to contact their parents and families in private.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

This standard was assessed as met. Boarders had unlimited access to e-mail, and the principal confirmed that a fax was available for use if needed by boarders. The school telephone box is situated in the dining room. The box is reasonably private, and a poster was present, with numbers provided with numbers boarders could phone if they wished to discuss a personal problem with someone from outside the school, including childline. Advice was given that the notice had out of date information on it regarding the inspection body, and needed to be updated to provide the appropriate number for the Commission for Social Care Inspection.

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.3) Reasonable protection is provided for boarders' personal possessions and for any boarders' money or valuables looked after by the school.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
This standard was assessed as met. The tour of boarding houses confirmed there were appropriate lockable spaces for boarders to securely store possessions. Appropriate pocket money records were held in the main school office.		

Standard 21 (21.1 - 21.3) There is an appropriate process of induction and guidance for new boarders.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
This standard was assessed as met. Feedback from boarders confirmed that the school had an effective buddy system where established boarders ensured new boarders were supported whilst they adjusted to life as a boarder at the school. The beddies officers were seen paying attention to new boarders as part of their overall responsibility. Ombudsmen also played a significant role in ensuring new, or vulnerable boarders were supported in expressing their opinions at community meetings.		

Standard 22 (22.1 - 22.4) Any guardians appointed by the school should be subject to the same recruitment checks as staff, and their care of pupils should be monitored.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	9
This standard did not apply to this school, as the school appointed no guardians.		

Standard 23 (23.1 - 23.4) The Head, or a senior member of the school's staff, regularly monitors the school's records of risk assessments, punishments, complaints and accidents, to identify any issues requiring action.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
This standard was assessed as met. The principal, and senior members of staff all lived on or near the school and played a very "hands on" role within the schools day-to-day events. Monitoring of the school records was undertaken on a regular basis.		

Standard 24 (24.1 - 24.8) Meals should be provided to boarders, which are adequate in quantity, quality and choice, and provision is made for special dietary, medical or religious needs.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	2
This standard was assessed as not fully met. All the meals taken by the inspectors with boarders were appealing, nutritious and well received by the pupils. A small minority made negative comments regarding the quantities available at the evening meals, however, other boarders confirmed that additional helpings were available to those who wanted them. The shortfall identified during the inspection related to food hygiene certificates. These needed updating, as some kitchen staff had not undertaken this training for over three years.		

Standard 25 (25.1 - 25.5) Boarders have access to drinking water in both boarding and teaching areas, and to food or the means of preparing food at reasonable times in addition to main meals.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
This standard was assessed as met. There were a number of different areas where boarders could prepare snacks and drinks. Drinking water was available in several areas, although the school has identified the provision of a drinking fountain as an area for development.		

Standard 26 (26.1 - 26.5) Boarders and boarding staff should be aware of emergency evacuation procedures from boarding accommodation. The school should comply with recommendations of the Fire Service, and should regularly carry out and record risk assessments in relation to fire, together with fire drills and any routine tests recommended by the Fire Service.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
This standard was assessed as met. The inspectors discussed fire evacuation procedures with boarders during the tours of the accommodation. On each occasion boarders demonstrated that they were aware of what to do in the event of the fire alarms sounding. Boarders also confirmed that fire drills took place regularly. Records maintained at the school confirmed that drills took place regularly and routine tests took place on all fire safety equipment. A fire had occurred at the school since the last inspection. The principal reported that the fire service had been pleased with the way the school reacted to the incident, where no one had been injured, and evacuation procedures worked well.		

Standard 27 (27.1 - 27.3) Schools where there are unusual or especially onerous demands on boarders ensure that these are appropriate to the boarders concerned and do not unacceptably affect boarders' welfare.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
This standard was assessed as met. There was no evidence of any onerous demands or activities undertaken at the school, and boarders confirmed that they were able to choose what activities they take part in.		

Standard 28 (28.1 - 28.2) The welfare of any children accommodated at the school, other than pupils, is protected.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	9
This standard did not apply. The school does not offer any accommodation to any children who are not boarders.		

Standard 29 (29.1 - 29.6)

Identifiably high-risk activities provided for boarders should be competently supervised and accompanied by adequate and appropriate safety measures.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****2**

This standard was assessed as not fully met. The records of risk assessments seen by the inspectors confirmed that the school had risk assessed major outings and trips, and consent forms were seen for pupils undertaking activities and large trips, such as abroad. However, there was a need for regular risk assessments to be made in relation to more routine trips, such as to London on theatre trips. Advice was given to the school to seek guidance from the DfES, or LEA regarding possible standard forms for such trips, ensuring information such as staff ratios, emergency telephone numbers and procedures in the event of someone going missing were consistently recorded, or the school would have to devise their own. A recommendation was made in respect of this.

Standard 30 (30.1 - 30.5)

Boarders have access to information about events in the world outside the school, and access to local facilities, which is appropriate to their age.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****3**

This standard was assessed as met. Newspapers were delivered to the school, and all boarders had access to news information, via the internet, on events relating to them individually.

STAFFING

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

- Boarders are adequately supervised by staff.
- Staff exercise appropriate supervision of boarders leaving the school site.
- Boarders are adequately supervised at night.
- Boarders are looked after by staff with specific boarding duties, with adequate induction and continued training.
- Boarders are looked after by staff following clear boarding policies and practice.
- There are sound relationships between staff and boarders.
- Boarders' personal privacy is respected.
- There is vigorous selection and vetting of all staff and volunteers working with boarders.
- Boarders are protected from unsupervised contact at school with adults who have not been subject to the school's complete recruitment checking procedures and there is supervision of all unchecked visitors to the boarding premises.

Standard 31 (31.1 - 31.7)

The staff supervising boarders outside teaching time should be sufficient in number and deployment for the age, number and needs of boarders, and the locations and activities involved.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
This standard was assessed as met. Duty rota's seen by the inspectors confirmed that there always a minimum of 4 members of staff on duty at any one time. As the majority of boarding staff lived on the site, the reality for boarders was that there were frequently more than this number. Procedures were in place for staff to cover in the event of sickness. Boarders and staff both reported that there were sufficient numbers of staff on duty.		

Standard 32 (32.1 - 32.5)

Boarders temporarily away from the school site remain under the overall responsibility of a duty member of staff, and are able to contact a member of staff in an emergency.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
This standard was assessed as met. The laws of the school included strict procedures for boarders of different ages leaving the school site. Normally, this involved at least one older boarder being present, or a member of staff in respect of younger boarders.		

Standard 33 (33.1 - 33.5)

Staff should be present, and accessible to boarders as necessary, in each boarding house at night.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

This standard was assessed as met. Four members of staff slept in boarding houses each night. The only house where staff did not sleep in was restricted to boarders aged over 15 boarders, and two specific members of staff, who slept in buildings adjacent, or close to the accommodation for senior boarders had been identified to boarders as the people to go to if an adult was needed. Boarders reported that this system worked in practice, and any closer level of supervision would not be welcomed.

Standard 34 (34.1 - 34.7)

All staff with boarding duties have job descriptions reflecting those duties, receive induction training in boarding when newly appointed, and receive regular review of their boarding practice, with opportunities for continuing training in boarding.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

2

This standard was assessed as not fully met. It was noted by the inspectors that the unique nature of Summerhill made it difficult for the school to access relevant training in boarding practices, however, there were a number of areas identified by the inspectors, which were common to all boarding provision, such as health & safety, risk assessing, recording and communication issues, which could benefit staff. A recommendation was made that a member of staff should attend ongoing training in areas such as health & safety, to keep up to date with current guidance in this area.

Standard 35 (35.1 - 35.4)

All staff with boarding duties are provided with up to date written guidance on the school's boarding policies and practice.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

2

This standard was assessed as not fully met. The school had a clear set of policies and procedures in the event of a member of staff having to be suspended as a result of an allegation. It was clear through discussion with the principal that the school a positive approach to supporting staff, however this needed to be confirmed in writing. Additional guidance should be provided for staff who were suspended, pending investigation of allegations of abuse, detailing the support the school would offer in such a case.

Standard 36 (36.1 - 36.4)

There are sound staff/boarder relationships.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

4

This standard was assessed as exceeded. The democratic nature of the school was evidenced by the records of school meetings, which confirmed that members of staff were as liable as boarders, to being brought up at the meeting, if others found their behaviour unreasonable or unfair, including pupils. This had happened and was evidence that disagreements between boarders and staff were dealt with reasonably. Boarders who spoke to the inspectors clearly stated that they were treated as complete equals by all of the staff at the school. The feedback from boarders, both in the pre inspection survey, and comments made to the inspectors, was also consistently positive regarding their relationships with staff.

Standard 37 (37.1 - 37.2)

Staff supervision of boarders should avoid intruding unnecessarily on boarders' privacy.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

This standard was assessed as met. Boarders confirmed that staff were available to boarders, but did not intrude upon their privacy. As members of staff were subject to the laws of the community in the same way as everyone else, intrusion of privacy would be seen as reason to be brought up at a school meeting, where the community could discuss the incident in detail if necessary.

Standard 38 (38.1 - 38.10)

Recruitment of all staff (including ancillary staff and those on a contractual/sessional basis) and volunteers who work with boarders (as defined in the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000) includes checks through the Criminal Records Bureau checking system (enhanced as appropriate), with a satisfactory outcome. There is a satisfactory recruitment process recorded in writing.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

2

This standard was assessed as not fully met. The inspectors examined the files of six employees. One had no reference. 1 no ref request letter on file, one had a "to whom it may concern" letter as a reference. The records seen confirmed that the school had produced reference request letters that related to last employer where applicable, and included reference as to any reason whether there was any known reason why the applicant might not be suitable to work with children. Some of the files could not evidence that explanations had been sought regarding gaps in employment. Criminal Records Bureau certificates were in place, but not for staff from abroad. A recommendation was made in respect of this shortfall. Inspectors gave a copy of a checklist the school may wish to use regarding recruitment.

Standard 39 (39.1 - 39.4)

The school does not allow any member of staff (including ancillary staff, sessional/contract staff and volunteers) to work unsupervised with boarders unless that member of staff has been satisfactorily checked with the Criminal Records Bureau.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

This standard was assessed as met. Peripatetic staff, and ancillary staff were subject to the same level of checks as other staff.

PREMISES

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

- Boarders are provided with satisfactory accommodation.
- Boarders have their own accommodation, secure from public intrusion.
- Boarders have satisfactory sleeping accommodation.
- Boarders have satisfactory provision to study.
- Boarders have adequate private toilet and washing facilities.
- Boarders have satisfactory provision for changing by day.
- Boarders have access to a range of safe recreational areas.
- Boarders are protected from safety hazards.
- Boarders are suitably accommodated when ill.
- Boarders' clothing and bedding are adequately laundered.
- Boarders can obtain personal requisites while accommodated at school.
- The welfare of boarders placed in lodgings is safeguarded and promoted.
- The welfare of boarders is safeguarded and promoted while accommodated away from the school site on short-term visits.

Standard 40 (40.1 - 40.8)

Boarding Houses (including dormitories and living areas) and other accommodation provided for boarders should be appropriately lit, heated and ventilated, suitably furnished, accessible to any boarders with disabilities, and adequately maintained.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

This standard was assessed as met. During the environmental tour, one boarder highlighted the cold temperature of one area. This was dealt with by the boarder by themselves, who reported it to a senior member of staff. Remedial action was taken within 24 hrs, to adjust the timing of the heating system. Other boarders reported later in the inspection, that they had to open windows to keep cool when the heating was on, and it was clear that the school had an effective heating system when in use. All of the boarding areas were adequately furnished. Some of the areas, such as the area known as the "Jazz Café" had been tastefully furnished and appeared comfortable and relaxing. None of the boarding areas were unnecessarily noisy.

Standard 41 (41.1 - 41.8)

Boarding accommodation is reserved for the use of those boarders designated to use it, and protected by access by the public.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

2

This standard was assessed as not fully met. Some of the houses did not have their own locking system. The school had fitted key pad locks to all houses, but were reviewing their use as some had broken, a recommendation was made in respect of this. No adverse comments were received regarding the issue of personal safety at night by any of the boarders.

Since the last inspection, a gate had been put up, signs had been put up directing all visitors to the office. Barriers had been put up in both entrances, one permanent, one that is closed at night.

The school had a written policy on challenging visitors, which was reported by staff and boarders alike to be effective.

Standard 42 (42.1 - 42.14)

Sleeping accommodation is suitably furnished and of sufficient size for the number, needs and ages of boarders accommodated, with appropriate separation between genders, age groups and from accommodation for adults.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

This standard was assessed as met. Beds were of sound construction. Ample space was available in bedrooms. There was no evidence of any cramping. Boarders all stated that they liked their rooms. All boarding accommodation for boarders aged 10 and over was fully separated by gender. Only the youngest share dorms. Advice was given that placing information in the school prospectus and parents handbook about the way boarding is separated throughout the school would enhance the system.

Standard 43 (43.1 - 43.2)

Suitable facilities for both organised and private study are available to boarders.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

This standard was assessed as met. The school has a flexible approach to lessons, but the facilities are available for boarders to use at any reasonable time. Computers are freely available and there were a number of areas where boarders could study quietly if they wanted to.

Standard 44 (44.1 - 44.10)

Adequate toilet and washing facilities are readily accessible to boarders, with appropriate privacy.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

2

This standard was assessed as not fully met. There were a suitable number of toilet and bathing facilities available to boarders. However, the environmental tour identified that some of the locks used could not be opened in the case of an emergency. A recommendation was made in respect of this.

Standard 45 (45.1 - 45.3) Suitable changing provision is provided for use by day.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
This standard was assessed as met. All of the boarders could use their own dormitories or bedrooms to change in.		

Standard 46 (46.1 - 46.6) Boarders have access to a range and choice of safe recreational areas, both indoors and outdoors.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
This standard was assessed as met. The school has a number of external recreational areas, including a skateboard 'half pipe', climbing areas, and a swing attached to a large beech tree. Risk assessments were seen in relation to this activity, and other recreational areas, such as the swimming pool.		

Standard 47 (47.1 - 47.9) Indoor and outdoor areas used by, or accessible to, boarders should be free from reasonably avoidable safety hazards.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
This standard was assessed as met. The school had a health and safety committee, with responsibility for undertaking regular walkabouts, with a view to identifying any hazards. Risk assessments were seen in relation to all areas of the school. The feedback from boarders confirmed that they were unaware of any serious injuries suffered by staff or boarders, in relation to any of the indoor or outdoor areas of the school.		

Standard 48 (48.1 - 48.4) Suitable accommodation should be available for the separate care of boarders who are ill.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
This standard was assessed as met. Separate accommodation was available within the school grounds for the purpose of accommodating children who were sick. This accommodation was viewed by the inspector, and found to be comfortable, and supplied with toilet and washing facilities.		

Standard 49 (49.1 - 49.3) Adequate laundry provision is made for boarders' clothing and bedding.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
This standard was assessed as met. The school had it's own laundry, where boarders can do their own washing, with the younger boarders having their laundry done for them by domestic and housekeeping staff.		

Standard 50 (50.1 - 50.2) Boarders are able to obtain minor necessary personal and stationery items while accommodated at school.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
This standard was assessed as met. During the inspection, boarders were seen obtaining stationery items from the school office. The school housekeeper also had a wide variety of toiletry and other personal items available to boarders if required.		

Standard 51 (51.1 - 51.11) Any lodgings arranged by the school to accommodate pupils provide satisfactory accommodation and supervision, are checked by the school before use, and are monitored by the school during use.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	9
This standard does not apply to this school. No lodgings are arranged by the school.		

Standard 52 (52.1 - 52.8) Any off-site short-stay accommodation arranged by the school for any of its boarders provides satisfactory accommodation and supervision, is checked by the school before use (although this may not be feasible when accommodation is in private households), and is monitored by the school during use.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	9
This standard does not apply to this school. The school does not provide any off site accommodation for boarders.		

PART C

LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY

(where applicable)

Lay Assessor _____ Signature _____

Date _____

PART D

HEAD'S RESPONSE

D.1 Head's comments/confirmation relating to the content and accuracy of the report for the above inspection.

We would welcome comments on the content of this report relating to the Inspection conducted on a 25th January 2005 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

Action taken by the CSCI in response to Head's comments:

Amendments to the report were necessary

YES

Comments were received from the Head

YES

Head's comments/factual amendments were incorporated into the final inspection report

YES

Head's comments are available on file at the Area Office but have not been incorporated into the final inspection report. The inspector believes the report to be factually accurate

Note:

In instances where there is a major difference of view between the Inspector and the Head both views will be made available on request to the Area Office.

D.2 Please provide the Commission with a written Action Plan by , which indicates how recommended actions and advisory recommendations are to be addressed and stating a clear timescale for completion. This will be kept on file and made available on request.

Status of the Head's Action Plan at time of publication of the final inspection report:

Action plan was required

YES

Action plan was received at the point of publication

YES

Action plan covers all the recommended actions in a timely fashion

YES

Action plan did not cover all the recommended actions and required further discussion

Head has declined to provide an action plan

Other: <enter details here>

D.3 HEAD'S AGREEMENT

Head's statement of agreement/comments: Please complete the relevant section that applies.

D.3.1 I Zoe Readhead of Summerhill School
confirm that the contents of this report are a fair and accurate representation
of the facts relating to the inspection conducted on the above date(s) and that
I agree with the recommended actions made and will seek to comply with
these.

Print Name	<u>ZOE READHEAD</u>
Signature	<u>Z Readhead</u>
Designation	<u>Principal</u>
Date	<u>11/4/05</u>

Note: In instance where there is a profound difference of view between the Inspector and the Head both views will be reported. Please attach any extra pages, as applicable.

Commission for Social Care Inspection
33 Greycoat Street
London
SW1P 2QF

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Summerhill School

Independent School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	935/6016
Unique Reference Number	124870
Inspection number	301621
Inspection dates	6 - 7 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Declan McCarthy

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002 (as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005).

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, in order to advise the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school. This inspection takes full account of the school's unique philosophy as required by the High Court Judgement of 2000.

Information about the school

Summerhill is a democratic, self-governing school providing boarding, day education and care for 78 pupils aged 5 – 17 years old. It is situated in the small market town of Leiston, within walking distance of the town centre.

The school adopts an alternative philosophy to education based on the work of its founder, A S Neill. It is based on the notion that children should be free to decide for themselves how to spend their time in school. The proprietor, who is the daughter of A S Neill, continues to uphold these principles. The daily life of the school is governed by the school meetings, held three times a week, in which everybody has an equal vote. School meetings are used to create, confirm and amend all the school laws which form the structure of expectations for the community of staff and pupils, in which the adults and children have complete parity of status. The school's philosophy is to allow freedom for the individual, each child being able to take their own path in life and find, through experience, the things that they want to do and the person they want to be. The school proposes that this leads to an inner self-confidence and real acceptance of themselves as people. All of this is done within the structures of the school, through the meetings, self-government and the clear distinctions between freedom and licence, all elements which are at the very core of the school's philosophy and the day-to-day experiences of the pupils and staff.

The school is part of a regional, national and international democratic network and reflects the extent of A S Neill's continuing influence on the world. This is mirrored in the pupil intake. Approximately two thirds of pupils (mainly Dutch, German, Korean Japanese, and Taiwanese) speak English as an additional language. The principal and, from time to time other staff and children, go out from the school to speak to and work with other children and adults and to promote democratic education.

Evaluation of the school

Summerhill provides a satisfactory quality of education for its pupils. Pupils learn appropriately and make satisfactory progress in their accredited courses because effective systems of assessment, tailored to the school's philosophy, are in place and the curriculum is satisfactory and relevant to their needs. Good quality teaching supports good progress in lessons and pupils make satisfactory progress in learning outside lessons. Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social

and cultural development, is outstanding and behaviour is good, mainly as a result of the good quality care, support and guidance they receive. The school meets nearly all the regulations.

Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory. It is relevant to the needs of pupils, with an appropriate emphasis on developing literacy and numeracy skills. The personal, social and health education curriculum which permeates the life of the school meets pupils' needs adequately. The curriculum also meets the needs of those pupils on the 'special attention' register including new arrivals, those with statements of special educational need and those who speak English as an additional language. A wide range of learning opportunities both within and outside lessons is available. There are suitable opportunities for pupils to take public examinations. Appropriate subject planning provides satisfactory opportunities for pupils to make progress. Pupils are able to choose and organise activities which they enjoy and find relevant. There are local community links through dance, sport and horse-riding and the school receives many visitors throughout the year on regular visiting days. Visitors are looked after by the Visitors' Committee and allowed to observe the whole-school community meeting.

Teaching is good and assessment is satisfactory overall. Relationships are very good and pupils are polite, courteous and considerate. Pupils really enjoy lessons. They are absorbed in their activities, highly motivated and focused on learning. Teachers challenge pupils' learning and provide good support to help clarify any misunderstandings. However, teachers do not set clear learning objectives at the beginning of lessons so that pupils know what they are expected to achieve, nor do they discuss with pupils how well they have achieved at the end of the lesson. One-to-one teaching is effective and small class sizes enable pupils to enjoy their learning and make good progress in lessons. There are sufficient resources which are well used by teachers to promote learning. Pupils make good use of information and communication technology outside lessons to support their learning. For example, an older pupil is learning Dutch through the exchange of emails and course work with a tutor in Holland.

Pupils make satisfactory progress overall, taking account of their learning outside lessons. By comparison, their progress in lessons is good. By the time they leave school they have gained an appropriate range of qualifications including GCSE passes and certificates in the use of English as a foreign language. There were some individual examples of very good progress made outside lessons, as seen in the high quality furniture pupils made in after school woodwork activities and in the 'RedRam' film production which received much praise and was presented as a film premiere to parents and the community. Pupils clearly make progress through such out-of-class activities. For example, when pupils are engaged in the game of dungeons and dragons, they are developing literacy, numeracy sub-skills of spatial awareness, creative and aesthetic skills and physical skills. The school regularly reviews the

progress of each pupil within its own relevant assessment system. Any pupil who is deemed to be making inadequate progress is provided with additional support or guidance. When they leave school, pupils usually continue their education or training. In 2007, all pupils who left Summerhill moved on to further education or training.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is outstanding. The democratic process used to manage the day-to-day running of the school, as seen in the various pupil committees and the whole-school community meeting, provides pupils with outstanding opportunities for personal development. Behaviour is good overall. Most pupils behave very well in and around the school, but a few pupils behave inappropriately. Pupils' attitudes to the school are very positive. They are rightly proud of their community and many are keen to share their positive experiences of their life in school. They are confident and articulate, with a strong sense of what is right and wrong. Their commitment to equality is seen in the day-to-day way they engage with each other. The democratic process enables even the younger pupils to reflect on issues which impact on the community, such as not clearing up sweet wrappers. Pupils have the choice whether or not to attend lessons and effective learning was observed both in and outside the classroom. A strength is the way in which pupils from different countries work together to form the school community, celebrating its international dimension. Pupils learn how to get on with each other through compromise, negotiation and communication within the community so that by the time they leave they are well rounded, confident and mature young people. Pupils develop a sound knowledge of public institutions.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The school's provision for the welfare, health and safety of its pupils is good. The dedication of the staff and the concern of the community as a whole ensure excellent support for all pupils. The school complies with safeguarding requirements. Pupils say they feel safe, and can always find someone to talk to if needed. This might be an ombudsman appointed by the school community, a member of staff or another pupil. Any instances of inappropriate behaviour, such as bullying, are brought up at the community meetings and dealt with effectively. Sanctions are clear and the community decides on the level of severity, agreeing which sanction to apply. Overall, behaviour is good, with pupils and staff showing great respect for each other. The school canteen offers healthy choices, although an entrepreneurial initiative to run a junk food shop provides crisps and fizzy drinks. The community effectively promotes pupils' awareness of health and safety issues. The school does not yet meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school makes all the necessary checks to ensure that all staff are suitable to work with children.

School's premises and accommodation

The school's premises are satisfactory. The main building, housing the dining room, the art room and living accommodation for some middle-school pupils, is well-appointed. Teaching blocks, some recently improved, are situated around the perimeter of an attractive open space. Good-sized classrooms and specialist teaching areas for practical subjects such as science and woodwork provide ample learning spaces. Attractive displays, including pupils' work and interesting posters, ensure that the classrooms for younger pupils are bright and stimulating, providing positive learning environments.

Other buildings include subject-specific teaching rooms for the older pupils, further accommodation for boarders and a gym, which also doubles as a theatre for plays and films. Extensive grounds complement the spacious premises. Pupils have exciting opportunities for play, which include a tree house, the revered 'Big Beech' and large climbing frames.

Very uneven flooring in the corridor by the kitchen is hazardous, as are the worn carpet tiles in the porch when they become scuffed.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school provides parents with all the required information. Helpful resources include the parents' handbook and an informative website, which captures the spirit of the school through photographs and comments. The school fully explains its philosophy about sharing information about an individual pupil with his or her parents. This only occurs with the pupil's agreement.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school's written complaints procedure fully complies with requirements.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005, with the exception of those listed below.

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the premises and accommodation (standard 5) and must do the following.

- Ensure that all flooring is safe (paragraph 5(s)).

In order to comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2002 the school should devise a three-year accessibility plan.

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by the regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- Empower young people to take even greater ownership of their learning by setting targets for themselves.
- Inform pupils what they are expected to achieve at the beginning of lessons, by setting clear objectives and review their progress against these at the end of lessons.

School details

Name of school	Summerhill School		
DCSF number	935/6016		
Unique reference number	124870		
Type of school	Primary and secondary		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1921		
Age range of pupils	5-17 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll	Boys: 40	Girls: 38	Total: 78
Number of boarders	Boys: 38	Girls: 37	Total: 75
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 2	Girls: 0	Total: 2
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of children receiving day care	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	£3,087 to £7,386		
Annual fees (boarders)	£7,086 to £12,315		
Address of school	Westward Ho		
	Leiston		
	Suffolk		
	IP16 4HY		
Telephone number	01728 830540		
Fax number	01728 830540		
Email address	zoe@summerhillschool.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mrs Zoe Redhead		
Proprietor	Mrs Zoe Redhead		
Reporting inspector	Declan McCarthy		
Dates of inspection	6-7 November 2007		

Summerhill School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103854
Local Authority	Dudley
Inspection number	308440
Inspection dates	30–31 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Judith Matharu HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1012
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Graham Knowles
Headteacher	Ben Warren
Date of previous school inspection	5 February 2004
School address	Lodge Lane Kingswinford DY6 9XE
Telephone number	01384 816165
Fax number	01384 816166

Age group	11–16
Inspection dates	30–31 January 2008
Inspection number	308440

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The Summerhill School is an above average sized community secondary school serving a relatively prosperous area of Dudley. The percentage of students known to be eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. The majority of students are of White British origin. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well below the national average. The school was awarded specialist languages status in September 2003. It also holds the Investors in People, Artsmark Silver and Sportsmark awards.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school with some outstanding features. It provides a consistently good standard of education and gives good value for money. Achievement is good and standards are above average overall and improving. The school is taking robust and effective action to raise standards at Key Stage 4 and is well placed to continue this improvement.

Staff and students are rightly proud of their school. Relationships in the school are very good and almost all students enjoy their education. This supportive and safe atmosphere leads to very high levels of attendance. Students' personal development is outstanding. They display excellent behaviour and very positive attitudes towards their learning. Students appreciate the strong contributions they are encouraged to make to many aspects of school life.

Consistently good and challenging teaching enables students to achieve high standards in their work. Lessons are usually lively and stimulating, providing appropriate challenge for all abilities. On occasions, teaching is outstanding. However, such excellent practice is not routinely disseminated across the school. The curriculum is good, being varied and appropriate for all abilities. More able students are suitably challenged by the possibility of taking external exams early. Vocational aspects have continued to develop as have the use and application of information and communication technology (ICT) for teaching and learning. A good range of enrichment days and extra-curricular activities enhance students' experiences and develop excellent work-related skills to prepare students for their future lives.

The school cares for students well and ensures that they feel safe and secure in school. Year heads and tutors are key adults in students' lives and students speak of their confidence in their teachers to help with any difficulties they may encounter. Academic tracking of progress and guidance for students are developing securely.

The headteacher and staff team are strongly committed to continual improvement. Leadership and management are solidly good at all levels and systems to monitor and evaluate the school's effectiveness are generally robust. However, the monitoring of teaching and learning is not as rigorous and systematic as it needs to be to improve teaching to the highest level. Subject leaders' roles in this respect are also underdeveloped.

The specialist status of the school has prompted a number of significant improvements. The use of ICT has improved significantly through better resources and specialist training for teachers. Work to improve the use of assessment to support learning has been sponsored by specialist college funds and is now having a positive impact on lesson planning, leading to the closer match of work to students' needs. The school offers a wide range of foreign languages: French, German, Spanish, Italian, Japanese and Russian. Some are available at 'entry' level, enhancing the range of academic and vocational courses available. There are good links with primary schools; ensuring pupils already have a good foreign language basis on entering Year 7.

What the school should do to improve further

- Share the best practice evident in the school more consistently, in order to improve all teaching and learning to the highest levels.
- Make the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning sharper and more rigorous, and involve subject leaders more fully in this process.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are consistently above average. From above average attainment on entry, students achieve standards at the end of Year 9 that are well above the national average. In 2007, Key Stage 3 test results were well above average in all subjects. In particular, results in English significantly improved from 2006 and placed the school at the first percentile of schools nationally. Students make good progress in all subjects at Key Stage 3 and sometimes excellent progress, as in English in 2007. Standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are also above the national average, although the gap between the school's results and national performance has closed over the past three years. The percentage of students gaining an A*–C grade GCSE in English and mathematics has been well above the national average for the past three years. Progress has been good over time at Key Stage 4, although it slowed to be satisfactory overall in 2007. Although good progress was achieved by both boys and girls in a number of subjects, including mathematics, progress in English was not as strong. In particular, the performance of higher ability girls in English was disappointing and performance in science overall at GCSE was below the school's expectations. The school recognises this and has carefully analysed the contributory factors. A robust action plan has been implemented to tackle the issues. For example, careful analysis of performance data has identified where students would benefit from individual mentoring and this has been successfully and rigorously implemented to good effect. Progress is carefully monitored across all subjects and, where students are underachieving, a range of suitable interventions has been introduced to boost progress.

Because of the school's efforts this year, the progress of current Year 11 students is significantly improved. The monitoring data held by the school confirms that students are on track to achieve more highly in 2008. Progress in science has dramatically improved with current module grades indicating that results will improve this year. Good progress was observed in lessons across all subjects at Key Stage 4 during the inspection. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make similarly good progress to others in their year groups.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Student's moral and social awareness is outstanding. Through the school's status as a language college, its various international links and a culturally inclusive curriculum, their cultural awareness is good, though their understanding of living in a diverse society in Britain is not as secure. Spiritual development is not as strong as moral and social development.

Behaviour is often exemplary in lessons and around the school, and students consistently express confidence in the staff's ability to meet their needs. They act responsibly and with great maturity, and have positive attitudes towards learning. As a result, they thoroughly enjoy the learning experiences offered by the school. Through a number of different student councils, they have a strong and active voice in the management of the school, especially in relation to healthy eating and to environmental matters. They also make a considerable contribution to the wider community, for example through fund raising for a wide range of charities. Students are very positive about the opportunities provided by the school, both in the formal curriculum and through the extensive out of school provision. The majority of students develop a very good understanding of their own emotional health and well-being, and are developing as mature and active citizens. Attendance is well above average. Students' good progress and high standards in basic skills prepare them well for their future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers have good subject knowledge. They use assessment information effectively to plan work and ensure that it meets the learning needs of all students. Marking is good, with occasional inconsistencies, and provides good guidance to help students improve their work. Activities in lessons are interesting and challenging and students respond enthusiastically. Teachers use ICT well to enrich students' experiences. For example, they use DVD and interactive whiteboards and ensure students routinely use computers themselves.

Teachers establish excellent working relationships and this contributes significantly to students' learning. In the best instances, lessons are exciting with questioning that stretches students' understanding and makes sure that they explain their knowledge well. Support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is effective and helps them make good progress.

While there are many significant strengths in teaching, the most effective practice is not always shared effectively enough to lift good teaching to outstanding. For example, in some lessons, even within one subject, students' learning is improved by working in small groups, but this practice is not common enough. The school is in the early stages of sharing its good practice.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school offers a wide and expanding range of subjects. Many students take Key Stage 3 assessments and GCSE examinations early so that they have opportunities to take further subjects. For example, the opportunity to take GCSE mathematics in Year 10 means that students are able to study a statistics course or AS level mathematics in Year 11. All students take two foreign languages at Key Stage 3, a benefit of being a specialist languages college. Provision for ICT is good and better than at the last inspection. It is continuing to improve with students increasingly being able to access subject websites to help their learning.

Subject content is well planned to meet the needs of all students. However, literacy and numeracy skills are not always fully integrated into planning in different subjects, but the school is aware of this and working to improve it. The wide range of visitors, visits and other activities enrich students' experiences. Many students participate in a good range of out-of-school activities. Vocational education, a weakness at the last inspection, is now good and improving. Students experience a wide range of opportunities to take workplace related courses in languages, engineering and business. The range is set to improve through new links with a consortium of local schools.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support for students are good. Students say they feel very well cared for and are confident to ask for any help they need, whatever the problem. Students are positive about the effective pastoral system that contributes to the caring ethos of the school. They feel safe in school, supported by the high levels of supervision throughout the day. There are good links with the local authority and other external agencies so that vulnerable students, including looked after children, are well cared for. Child protection and safeguarding procedures

are well established and meet statutory requirements. Health and safety checks and risk assessments are conducted on a regular basis, particularly when visits are made out of school.

Careers and further education guidance is a strong feature as part of a good personal, social and health education and citizenship programme with students being engaged in relevant activities from Year 7. The school works hard to raise the students' aspirations. Systems for tracking students' progress are developing. Recently introduced robust procedures for assessing and monitoring students' progress and for intervening when weaknesses are identified are beginning to bring improvements. However, these have yet to influence external examination results at Key Stage 4.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school is well led and managed. The headteacher provides a clear vision for the school that is well articulated, shared and understood by staff. There is a clear aim to challenge each student to fulfil their potential within a warm and supportive environment. The senior team are well organised and work together effectively. The non-teaching staff are led well and contribute strongly to whole-school improvement. There is a very clear understanding of the school's strengths and priorities for action. Consequently, self-evaluation is largely accurate. A sharp focus on raising achievement at Key Stage 4 and the implementation of an appropriate action plan are improving the progress of older students.

Subject leaders contribute strongly to whole-school improvement. They are conscientious and work well with the senior team on strategies for raising achievement. However, their roles in evaluating teaching and learning in their departments, and improving this to the next level, are still underdeveloped. Monitoring of the work of subject and year leaders is extensive. However, the monitoring of teaching and learning is not yet as sharp or structured as it could be.

There is a strong commitment to staff development and training and staff value this supportive environment. Parental satisfaction with the school is high. Governors are well organised, knowledgeable and supportive, yet able to hold the school to account very well, admirably fulfilling their role as 'critical friends'. The school has made good improvements since the last inspection and the school's plans and drive to move forward indicate that there is good capacity to improve further.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
--	-----------------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

4 February 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of The Summerhill School, Dudley DY6 9XE

Thank you for your warm welcome when we visited your school. We enjoyed meeting you and hearing your views of Summerhill. Many of you spoke with pride about your school and we were impressed with your enthusiasm for many of the school's activities.

We found that Summerhill is providing you with a good quality education and, as you rightly identified, there are many features to be proud of. You achieve high standards in tests at the end of Year 9 and, although results at GCSE in 2007 were not as high as the school expected, things are now back on track, as we saw in lessons. The teaching you receive is generally good, and occasionally outstanding. You enjoy warm and supportive relationships with your teachers and you told us that you feel well cared for in school. Most of you behave in an exemplary manner and display mature, responsible attitudes, both in your lessons and around the site. You contribute very strongly to your school's success. This is very impressive, and it results in very positive attitudes to your learning. We noted that you respect and look after your surroundings very well; it helps that they are so bright and attractive! Your school is well led and managed by your headteacher and his team.

A particularly good feature of your school is that it constantly looks for ways to improve. All your teachers want Summerhill School to be outstanding in every respect. We have asked your staff to think about just two things. Firstly, to make sure that the outstanding teaching is shared widely across the whole staff team. Secondly, to make sure that when senior staff and subject leaders observe lessons, they are very clear about the best practice they are looking for. We agree with your teachers that teaching and learning in Summerhill has the potential to become outstanding and we wish you every success in the future.

We look forward to hearing of your progress.

Best wishes

Judith Matharu Her Majesty's Inspector

4 February 2008

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We look forward to hearing of your progress.

Best wishes

Judith Matharu
Her Majesty's Inspector

Summerhill School

Independent school standard inspection report

DfE registration number	935/6016
Unique Reference Number (URN)	124870
URN for social care	SC024584
Inspection number	361357
Inspection dates	5–6 October 2011
Reporting inspector	John Seal HMI
Social care inspector	Dawn Taylor

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.^{1, 2}

The inspection of boarding provision was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for boarding schools, in order to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and the government of the quality and standard of the service provided.^{3, 4}

Information about the school

Summerhill School is an independent democratic, self-governing boarding school for boys and girls aged from five to 17 years. The aims and philosophy of the school are based on those of A S Neill who founded the school in 1921. The Principal and proprietor of the school is the founder's daughter. The aims of the school are:

- to provide choices and opportunities that allow children to develop at their own pace and to follow their own interests
- to allow children to be free from compulsory or imposed assessment, allowing them to develop their own goals and sense of achievement
- to allow children to be completely free to play as much as they like
- to allow children to experience the full range of feelings free from judgement and intervention of an adult
- to allow children to live in a community that supports them and that they are responsible for in which they have the freedom to be themselves, and have the power to change community life, through the democratic process.

The school is registered for 90 pupils. At the time of the inspection there were 66 on roll, of which 58 were boarders and eight were day pupils. The school is located in the village of Leiston in Suffolk. Most of the pupils come from a wide range of international backgrounds and a few of them are at an early stage of learning English. There are no pupils with a statement of special educational needs and a very small number of pupils have been identified as having special educational needs

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents.

² www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents.

³ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents.

⁴ www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/a00192112/boarding-schools.

and/or disabilities. The educational provision of the school and the boarding provision were both last inspected in November 2007.

Evaluation of the school

Summerhill School provides a good quality of education. It meets all the regulatory requirements for independent schools, which is an improvement from the last inspection. All the points for development outlined in the previous report have been addressed. The school meets its aims very successfully. Strengths of the school include outstanding pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and outstanding promotion of pupils' welfare health and safety, including effective safeguarding procedures. Pupils' behaviour is outstanding and they make good progress. The curriculum and teaching and assessment are good. The national minimum standards for boarding schools are met and overall effectiveness for the boarding experience is outstanding.

Quality of education

The good curriculum is underpinned by effective written policies and schemes of work. Planning for lessons in all subjects is set out clearly with units of work that have clearly identified objectives and resources. An outstanding feature is the way in which learning is closely tailored to match individual pupil's needs, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. A fundamental aspect of the school's curriculum is that learning takes place out of lessons as well as in them.

Pupils are free to choose whether or not they attend lessons. When not in lessons, pupils can be involved in whatever activity that captures their interest. These include making films, organising and performing in musical or dramatic events, and learning different languages. Physical activities include trampolining, skateboarding, riding bikes and climbing trees.

Pupils' personal, social, health and education are promoted extremely well. Pupils talk about the range of physical activities they can choose to take part in or organise themselves with regard to physical education. In addition to the many opportunities to be physical active in the grounds, sporting activities include football, basketball and using the local leisure centre. Discussions about smoking and substance abuse are promoted very well across the education and boarding provision. Skills in information and communication technology (ICT) are well provided for with opportunities for pupils, should they so wish, to gain qualifications. Almost all pupils choose to take GCSE examinations.

Pupils have an extremely deep understanding of work-related learning. There are important roles and responsibilities for pupils that are an integral characteristic of the school both in education and boarding. These are taken very seriously by the pupils. An example is how 'Beddies Officers' work alongside house parents to ensure

bedtimes are peaceful. Ombudsmen investigate any disagreements or inappropriate behaviour and if they cannot be resolved, bring them to the school meeting. Pupils say that they receive personalised advice and guidance on their next steps in education. Consequently, pupils go on to a wide range of courses, training and employment.

Teaching and assessment are good. Teaching is never less than good with some outstanding features. Key features of the best practice are the mature and co-operative interactions between pupils and staff that lead to closely-tailored activities matching the needs, abilities and interests of every individual pupil. As a result, all pupils have opportunities to acquire and develop a love of learning and interest in the world. Teachers use their good subject knowledge to tap into pupils' interests subtly and skilfully. Consequently, pupils become absorbed in what they are doing and make good progress, both in lessons and in the other activities they choose to do. Boarding and academic staff work very effectively together to coordinate provision. They have consistently high aspirations for all boarders in line with the school's ethos and values.

All boarding staff take on an academic role. As a result, all staff's knowledge and understanding of the next steps for pupils' learning is good. Challenging debates and coaching sessions are commonly seen. One pupil spoke of the helpful 'maths clinics', drop-in sessions where pupils could share difficulties or challenges with the teacher. Another pupil spoke of how she felt her teacher was 'learning alongside' her about her country of origin.

The philosophy of the school encourages pupils to be independent and free of formal monitoring and evaluation of their progress; nonetheless, the school knows how well each individual is doing and some individual pupils' work is kept. There are some outstanding examples of marking and assessment. For example, in history written comments are made on why a piece of work is good and points for development are given. However, much assessment information is anecdotal, varying from teacher to teacher and pupil to pupil, which is in keeping with the aims and philosophy of the school.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils continues to be outstanding. Pupils have exceptionally positive attitudes towards their school life, both boarding and education. They are proud to be 'Sumerhillians'. Their pride is translated into being keen ambassadors who promote their school's philosophy at national and international events. Attendance is above average, including for the day pupils. The school's aims and philosophy regarding how pupils live their lives and learn supports them in developing mature and responsible attitudes to living in a community. At the heart of the school is the democratic approach to the running of the school. Key events each week are the school meetings: pupils and staff meet to share and discuss information and make decisions as a community of equals. During

these meetings, pupils are extremely skilled in assuming roles such as Chair, Secretary and Ombudsmen. Challenging issues are raised, for example, how the rare incidents of inappropriate behaviour by a very small number of individuals are addressed by discussing and voting on any consequences. Pupils develop clear views on how to live their lives and there is a tangible atmosphere of tolerance and harmony. For example, pupils from different countries learn and live side-by-side, often helping each other to learn different languages or improve their English. Several pupils told inspectors that the school 'is like a family'. The school provides pupils with an outstanding understanding of institutions and services in England through the democratic approach taken across the school and in lessons such as citizenship where pupils are encouraged to explore how decisions are made in Parliament.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The education and boarding promotion of pupils' welfare, health and safety is outstanding. The national minimum standards for boarding are met. Safeguarding policies and procedures are robust. All staff are fully trained in child protection at requisite levels and alert to possible concerns, in line with the philosophy of the school. This is clearly stated and known to parents who send their children to the school. The school's approach to boarding and education is all-encompassing. The definition between freedom and licence is clearly defined to ensure individuals' freedoms are protected. Staff know the pupils very well, leading to highly positive relationships. Pupils who spoke to inspectors and completed questionnaires said they felt extremely safe and cared for. One of them said: 'I love Summerhill, it is a great place where I feel I can be myself. I feel super-safe, it is like my second home.' Pupils are confident that any problems or difficulties can be dealt with through the school meetings. Pupils have many opportunities to live healthy lifestyles through choosing a range of physical activities, many of them outdoors. Risk assessments are taken very seriously and are up-to-date and secure. The democratic approach to how the school runs ensures that pupils develop a high level of respect for the privacy of others. Pupils are prepared for their future lives and responsibilities extremely well. The buildings and grounds provide a safe environment to try things out. The school meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

The school has effectively carried out the required checks on all staff and proprietors prior to their appointment to make sure there are no reasons why they should not be employed to work with children. The required checks are recorded in a single central register.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The school and its grounds comply with regulatory requirements. Boarding accommodation is provided with regard to the national minimum standards for boarding schools. Classrooms and boarding accommodation are in good condition and suitable for the curriculum and numbers on roll. The accommodation has different areas, reflecting the needs of the pupils' ages. There are good facilities and comfortable dormitory accommodation areas, which continue to be developed. There are areas with long-established names; San, Cottage, House, Shack and Carriages. Some bedrooms are more personalised than others, based on individual choice. There are public spaces, including a lounge, music room, and library. The accommodation and grounds form an integral part of the values, culture and history of the school. The grounds consist of wooded areas, trees and diverse areas of paths, undergrowth, grass meadows, playing field and tarmac.

Provision of information

The school provides clear, accurate and up-to-date information for current and prospective parents, carers, inspectors, Ofsted and the Department for Education (DfE) on request. There is a clear and helpful prospectus and the website is being updated. The school has very established aims and objectives which are extensively shared with parents and carers, pupils and staff. This ensures that all parents are well-informed about the education and boarding provision. All the questionnaires returned from parents and carers were highly positive. How the school shares information with parents and carers is clearly explained. The school's philosophy is that any information shared can only be done with the pupils' agreement.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The school's complaints procedure meets the requirements.

Leadership and management of boarding

Leadership and management of boarding are outstanding. Boarding and the individual experience of the child lies at the heart of Summerhill School. Strong community values contribute to boarders' personal and social development. Many boarders speak highly of the school. They state, 'The house parents are brilliant', 'Summerhill is everything that I could ask for', 'I love Summerhill, it is a great place where I feel I can be myself', 'Boarding life is fantastic. I wouldn't want to be anywhere else', 'Best school...I could not have had a happier, more fulfilling time here'. The whole school community has a very clear view and understanding of the strengths of the boarding experience at Summerhill. Individual or groups can suggest improvements or changes by proposing them during the school meetings. The community can then vote on the proposal and, if the majority agrees, the changes

are actioned and implemented. This democratic process ensures consistent re-evaluation of practice and individual's experience. The Principal and Vice Principal provide valued support to the boarding staff team and are actively involved in the day-to-day life of the school. The house parents are energetic and enthusiastic, and have excellent relationships with the boarders. They are fully aware of the diverse nature and needs of the boarders' and ensure they all are enabled to grow and flourish by creating a safe and welcoming family atmosphere.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets all The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations').

National minimum standards

The school meets the national minimum standards for boarding schools and associated regulations.

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- continue to explore best practice in strategies and mechanisms of assessment which are in keeping with the school's philosophy and aims.

Inspection judgements

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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The quality of education

Overall quality of education		✓		
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils		✓		
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs		✓		
How well pupils make progress in their learning		✓		

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	✓			
The behaviour of pupils	✓			

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils	✓			
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Inspection judgements

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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Overall effectiveness of the boarding experience

Overall effectiveness of the boarding experience	✓			
Outcomes for boarders	✓			
Quality of boarding provision and care	✓			
Boarders' safety	✓			
Leadership and management of boarding	✓			

School details

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Democratic, self-governing, boarding.		
Date school opened	13 March 1921		
Age range of pupils	5–17		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time day pupils)	Boys: 3	Girls: 5	Total: 8
Number of boarders	Boys: 30	Girls: 28	Total: 58
Number of students with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 0	Girls : 0	Total: 0
Number of students who are looked after	Boys: 0	Girls : 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	£3,735–£8,931		
Annual fees (boarders)	£8,568–£14,889		
Address of school	Westward Ho, Leiston, IP16 4HY		
Telephone number	01728 830540		
Email address	office@summerhill.co.uk		
Headteacher	Zoe Readhead		
Proprietor	Zoe Readhead		

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



7 October 2011

Dear Summerhillians

Inspection of Summerhill School, Leiston, IP16 4HY

We really enjoyed our recent visit to your school. Thank you for making us feel so welcome. We met with groups of you, observed lessons and looked at your work. Everybody we talked to told us how much they enjoyed themselves, how happy they were and how extremely safe they felt. All the inspection team totally agree with what you told us. The inspection found that the school provided you with a good educational experience with outstanding features and your boarding experience is outstanding.

Some of the outstanding features we found included:

- how well you get on with each other and the very impressive way the school meetings are run
- the way you choose to do things in lessons and around the school
- how your teachers help you discover things during lessons
- your behaviour in lessons, around the school and where your boarding provision
- how the school keeps you safe, happy and prepares you for your future lives.

We talked with Zoe and your teachers about how you can all look at the progress you make in your activities. We agreed that you may want to think and discuss how each of you can compare what you have done in different activities to see how they have changed during your time at the school.

Yours sincerely

John Seal
Her Majesty's Inspector

Summerhill School

Lodge Lane, Kingswinford, DY6 9XE

Inspection dates

29–30 November 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
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Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The large majority of teaching is good throughout the school. Some teaching and learning are outstanding.
- Students' achievement is good. Standards are above average overall by Year 11; a higher than the national proportion of students make good or better progress.
- Students' attitudes to learning are excellent. Behaviour around school is most civilized.
- There are high levels of respect shown across the school as a community.
- Students cooperate well together and know how to keep each other safe while at school.
- Staff have high expectations of the students, who appreciate what their teachers have to offer, both in terms of pastoral support and academic guidance.
- Effective leadership and teamwork have ensured good improvements in students' progress. This results from the effective checking of teaching and learning.
- The governing body is also active in checking the school's life and work. Collectively, in partnership with the staff, governors make a major contribution to the students' education.
- The school's track record confirms a strong capacity to achieve further improvement. This is based on accurate and searching self-evaluation.
- Development planning shows the school understands well what it needs to improve. Staff are focused effectively on bringing out the best in all students.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The proportion of outstanding teaching is not yet high enough; there remains some teaching which requires improvement.
- Work is not always planned specifically enough to meet the needs of individuals or some groups of students.
- Questioning is not always used consistently or regularly enough to check on students' understanding of their learning in lessons.
- Some subject leaders are still developing the skills to support fully the school's monitoring and evaluation work. This includes making sure marking is consistent in giving written feedback to students about their work.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 45 lessons, including six joint observations with members of the senior leadership team. In addition, inspectors undertook a scrutiny of students' work in English, mathematics, science and modern foreign languages.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of school documents, including: school policies; self-evaluation reports; various monitoring files; development plans; safeguarding and curriculum materials; governing body documents; and information for parents and carers, including that provided on the school's website.
- Meetings were held with various groups of students, including those whose circumstances make them more vulnerable. In addition, many informal opportunities were taken to talk with students.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher and all other members of the senior leadership team, the school's pastoral team, heads of subject departments, administrative staff, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 48 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), and the 41 responses to the questionnaire for school staff.

Inspection team

Michael Miller, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Raymond Biglin

Additional Inspector

Patrick Walsh

Additional Inspector

Balbir Kaur-Pierpoint

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized secondary school. It is a specialist languages college.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for the attainment and progress of students by the end of Year 11.
- Most students are of White British heritage; very few come from other ethnic heritage backgrounds. Almost all students speak English as their first language; the percentage speaking English as an additional language is well below average.
- The proportion of students who are known to be eligible for the pupil premium, the additional funding provided by the government, is well below average.
- A very few of the school's students currently attend alternative provision for a practical engineering course and a local authority residential therapeutic school.
- The proportions of disabled students, those who have special educational needs or who are supported through school action is well below average.
- The proportion of students supported at school action plus, or who have a statement of special educational needs, is below average. The primary needs of most such students cover a wide range; but most have autistic spectrum disorder, moderate learning difficulties, physical disability, or speech, language and communication needs.
- The school currently holds the following awards: Investors in People; the BECTA ICT Award; a Specialist Schools Trust award; a Health Promoting Schools award; the Black Country Gold Standard Quality Award for careers education and guidance; the Black Country Gold Standard Quality Award for work placements.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the proportion of outstanding teaching, and consequently students' achievement, by:
 - developing the skills of all teachers in the use of data and assessment information in their lesson planning to ensure work is sufficiently demanding for all students
 - ensuring that all lesson activities take full account of individual students' learning styles, so that their different needs are catered for more specifically
 - using questioning more regularly in lessons to check more precisely and consistently on students' progress, and to identify more clearly their next steps in learning.
- Broaden the impact of the school's leadership and management by:
 - improving the impact of the school's less-experienced subject leaders by developing fully the skills they need to support senior leaders in checking the school's work
 - using data on students' performance more often to fine tune teachers' approaches to improving teaching and learning
 - ensuring a consistent approach across the school to the regular marking of students' work, and written feedback to students, to help them understand and remember better what to improve.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- The large majority of students join the school in Year 7 with levels of attainment which are usually at the higher end of the average range; a small minority of students are above average. Most students make good progress. Attainment in GCSE examinations is typically above average.
- In English and mathematics, students make better than expected progress overall, although this is currently stronger in mathematics than in English. However, all students take English language, and most have the opportunity to take English literature. The proportions gaining A* to C and higher A* and A passes in English and mathematics is above average.
- In mathematics, students in the top two Year 9 sets have the opportunity to start their GCSE courses early and take the examination in Year 10. School data show they are not disadvantaged by this and benefit from being able to take additional subjects, such as statistics, during Year 11. GCSE pass rates in mathematics and statistics are above average.
- In the sciences, the proportion of students making expected progress fell significantly in 2011, but has recovered in 2012. This resulted from very focused support and monitoring, not only by senior leaders but also with the support of a local authority advisor. This support is continuing, as a school priority, to ensure the track record for improvement is maintained.
- The school has proved particularly successful in the English Baccalaureate. Over half of the students take the required combinations, and the percentage gaining this qualification level is twice the national average.
- As a specialist languages college, almost all students take at least one modern foreign language at GCSE level. This is significantly higher than in most schools. The proportions gaining A* to C passes is broadly average. The advantage of having achieved a qualification in a second language stands students in good stead for their future, and contributes well to the development of their communications skills. A very small minority take more than one language; most who do so achieve higher level passes.
- During the inspection, students' progress was good or better in the large majority of lessons seen. In a few classes, students were not given sufficiently demanding work to do, or the work was not matched sufficiently well to their individual needs.
- Given their starting points and individual needs, school data show that disabled students and those who have special educational needs make good overall progress. As with others, their progress is currently better in mathematics than in English. However, this is now improving, particularly in Key Stage 3, as the school has introduced a programme of individual support for literacy. This is now being extended to enhance students' numeracy skills.
- The very few students known to be eligible for the pupil premium make good progress, but data show that their attainment is slightly lower than other groups. However, the school is focused well on closing the gap in performance between these students and the others. Funding is used effectively to provide individual support for such students.
- The progress of the very few individuals who speak English as an additional language is good; again, this is due to effectively targeted one-to-one support. The welfare and progress of the very few students for whom the school makes alternative provision, at other specialist

educational establishments, is monitored carefully. Given their individual circumstances, these students are making good progress.

- Overall, students are prepared very well for their future lives. In recent years, almost no Year 11 students fail either to go on to sixth form or college courses, or to find work. School data also show that students' progress is accelerating overall in Years 7 to 9, and this bodes well for increased success as students move into Key Stage 4 and start their examination work.

The quality of teaching is good

- The practical influence of the teaching extends well beyond lessons. The staff provide good, and often outstanding role models for the students. Working relationships are strong, and contribute significantly to the excellent attitudes shown by the students. There are mutually high expectations between teachers and students, and this is a strength of the school.
- In the few lessons where teaching required improvement, this was mainly because teachers talked too much, and this limited the students more active or practical involvement in learning. In such cases, the teacher often showed very good subject knowledge, but did not use this sufficiently effectively to ensure a suitably challenging pace to the lesson.
- In order to extend further the proportion of outstanding teaching, the school has identified the need to place a greater emphasis on the development of some teachers' skills in the use of questioning. This is to ensure regular checks in lessons on students' understanding of their work.
- Furthermore, lesson planning is sometimes too general, and not focused sufficiently on the needs of individual students. This is because the extensive data collected by the school on students' progress is not used consistently well enough by some teachers to aid their planning.
- Oral feedback to students is mostly good. Discussions with students show students value the verbal feedback teachers give them during lessons. However, the quality of written marking is too inconsistent both across the school and within departments. In a few cases, marking is not regular enough. Discussions with students also highlighted this inconsistency.
- Some particularly outstanding teaching and learning were seen in Year 9 during an English and a French lesson, a Year 10 food studies lesson, and a Year 11 science lesson. The quality these had in common was the high levels of challenge, which enabled students to show their individuality and creativity. There were also opportunities for students, of all abilities, to reflect together on their learning. This contributed significantly to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- In the Year 10 food studies lesson, students made splendid use of the ideas they had gleaned the previous day from their visit to a national food exhibition. Working very effectively in pairs, they planned a most imaginative range of both sweet and savoury pies. This included using historical knowledge to design a mediaeval, 'peasant poachers' pie and a witty 'spy pie' where the decoration spelt out the ingredients in morse code. The lesson contained high quality ideas and work and was enjoyed immensely by all the students who made significant gains in their progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- There is a strong focus on the students' all-round, personal development, and not simply their academic achievement. Students appreciate the many ways their teachers are always there for

them, not least through the regular 15 minutes after school when teachers make themselves available for individual advice and mentoring. Such approaches help the students to understand, and value their education.

- Students are confident learners who demonstrate an excellent willingness to take on new challenges. They respond extraordinarily well to such opportunities and have exemplary attitudes to learning. Even where the teaching requires improvement, and students find themselves more passive learners, they maintain high levels of attention. Students listen to their teachers because they appreciate staff have much to offer them.
- Life at the school never lacks interest. Students are too engrossed in their work to become distracted. They want to come to school, and this is reflected in above-average attendance rates. Behaviour and safety are outstanding because the students develop self-confidence, socialise exceptionally well, and sustain high levels of concentration throughout the school day.
- Discussions with students show that the influence of the school's pastoral team is extensive. The school aids significantly their development as responsible young citizens. Students show very good levels of self-control, reflecting the high quality of their social and moral development. They say they feel safe at school and have a very good understanding of how to keep themselves free from harm in a range of situations.
- Students show high levels of awareness of the potential impact of any anti-social behaviour. This includes the different types of bullying, particularly cyber bullying, homophobia and racism in contemporary society. They applaud the school's zero tolerance of such activities. As one Year 7 student said, 'I just love this school. It is so secure.'

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and senior leadership team encourage the energy and enthusiasm of staff which are enabling the school to build securely on its strengths. Leaders and managers have a realistic view of how well the school is doing and this is reflected in their priorities for improvement. This is linked closely to performance management and teachers' professional support and training. It has also helped to establish the school's high expectations which have resulted in students' excellent attitudes to learning.
- The good and better teaching has been secured through focused monitoring by the school's leaders at all levels. Joint observations during the inspection confirmed the accuracy of the senior leadership team's assessments of the quality of teaching and learning. Heads of department are held to account, on a weekly basis, by senior leaders. Any points identified for further improvement are linked well to teachers' professional development. The school has developed its own 'Teaching Toolbox' to guide and support staff.
- The key element for improvement lies in strengthening the role and experience of a number of subject leaders. This is related specifically to helping them develop fully the skills to support the senior leadership team in their monitoring and evaluation work. There also remain some inconsistencies in the effectiveness with which leaders check on the marking of students' work.
- The school ensures that all students are treated equally and that discrimination of any kind is not tolerated. It fosters good relations with parents and outside agencies in supporting students' learning.
- There is a positive working relationship between the school and the local authority. Monitoring

by the local authority is 'light touch' but effective; this includes regular termly reviews of the school's performance, and helpful advice about performance management. The local authority has also supported the school in its work to develop the science department, and in advice for subject leaders to help improve teachers' techniques in the use of questioning in lessons.

■ The governance of the school:

- The governing body makes an important contribution to the school's everyday life and work. It is well-informed, not only through the headteacher's regular reports but also through monitoring visits. There are good systems to ensure regular dialogue, and accountability, between subject leaders and the governing body. Individual governors use their personal and professional expertise effectively to the benefit of the school. Records show governors attend relevant professional training to help them fulfil their roles. The governing body checks systematically on the impact of teachers' performance management targets. Together with the senior leadership team, they ensure such targets are linked directly to the quality of teaching, accountability and salary structure. This approach is focused very well on maintaining and developing further the quality of learning and ensuring students' progress. Governors have a good understanding of performance data and how this compares with similar schools. The school's finances are managed effectively. The governing body evaluates regularly the use of the pupil premium funding and produces a specific statement showing how it is spent. This funding is being used to finance a range of focused individual support and enrichment opportunities for the few students concerned. This ranges from specific literacy support to funding to help develop individual students' personal gifts and talents. This is helping to close any gap between such students' own performance and all other students. The governing body takes the safeguarding of students very seriously. Systems and processes for safeguarding students are secure.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	103854
Local authority	Dudley
Inspection number	402928

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1012
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Graham Knowles
Headteacher	Ben Warren
Date of previous school inspection	30 January 2008
Telephone number	01384 816165
Fax number	01384 816166
Email address	bwarren@summerhill.dudley.sch.uk

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Summerhill School

Lodge Lane, Kingswinford, West Midlands DY6 9XE

Inspection dates

22–23 November 2016

Overall effectiveness

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outcomes for pupils

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Requires improvement

Requires improvement

Requires improvement

Good

Requires improvement

Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders have, in the past, not held teachers to account with sufficient rigour for the quality of their work. As a result, there has been a decline in pupils' progress.
- Outcomes for pupils have declined since the previous inspection. Rates of progress are variable, particularly for most-able pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The information that leaders collect, about how well pupils do, currently does not allow accurate examination predictions to be made.
- Middle leaders have previously not monitored the quality of teaching sufficiently well. This has resulted in discrepancies between subjects. New opportunities for teachers to benefit from the best practice at the school, and from training and development, have not yet improved teaching sufficiently.
- Systems in place to routinely monitor the information collected about pupils' behaviour are inconsistent. As a result, leaders are not able to fully evaluate the effectiveness of strategies to improve behaviour.

The school has the following strengths

- The newly appointed executive headteacher has acted quickly and decisively to identify and address aspects of the school that require improvement. Other leaders, staff, parents and pupils share the executive headteacher's vision to improve the school.
- Disadvantaged pupils make rates of progress comparable to those of other pupils nationally. The additional funding the school receives has been used to good effect.
- Pupils behave well. There is a culture of strong, positive relationships between pupils and adults, and among pupils, which supports learning well. Pupils rightly feel safe in school. Attendance is good and exclusion rates low.
- Pupils' personal development and welfare are good because of their participation in a wide range of appropriate, high-quality experiences. The school successfully promotes values such as tolerance, mutual respect and fairness.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by:
 - developing the role and capacity of middle leaders to check the consistent application and impact of whole-school initiatives
 - ensuring that teachers' development is appropriate and targeted to improve teaching and outcomes
 - making sure that the best teaching practice is shared widely and systematically across the school
 - improving the reliability and validity of information leaders collect about pupils' progress
 - introducing systems to regularly monitor, review and evaluate information about pupils' behaviour and conduct
 - holding staff to account through clear systems that manage their performance.
- Ensure that teaching is consistently good or better by:
 - using questioning more effectively to enable pupils to develop their reasoning and extend their thinking
 - providing learning activities that challenge pupils of all abilities so they can achieve their best in lessons
 - making sure teachers check pupils' understanding effectively in lessons to help their learning
 - developing the quality of feedback to support pupils to improve their work.
- Further reduce all gaps in the performance of different groups of pupils by increasing their rates of progress to at least the expected level.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Teachers' performance has not been well managed in the past and there are not clear links between performance objectives, quality of teaching, pupils' outcomes and professional teaching standards. Leaders have started to address these issues.
- Heads of department do not routinely monitor the quality of teaching in their subject areas. Consequently, differences in the way the school's expectations are applied have not been tackled. This has contributed towards variation in the quality of teaching and outcomes. Middle leaders now are developing a better understanding of, and experience in, carrying out their responsibilities. They benefit from, and are appreciative of, coaching and development provided by senior leaders.
- Relevant and useful professional development and training opportunities are planned for all staff. These take into account teachers' career stage and level of expertise. In the past, a lack of comprehensive information about the quality of teaching has meant that development opportunities have not been sharply focused to meet teachers' needs. Also, existing expertise has not been used to the full to develop colleagues. Recent high-quality training has had variable effect on improving the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes, and its impact has been informally monitored. Leaders' clear priorities for training are now linked to accurate identification of aspects of teaching that require improvement.
- Leaders regularly collect information to track pupils' progress. Teachers use this information to predict how well pupils will do in their GCSE examinations. In 2016, these predictions were imprecise. This was because the information available was not always reliable. Leaders ensure that middle leaders have access to information from examination boards and use external support to validate their assessments. Leaders recognise that changes to the structure of GCSE assessment will affect the accuracy of predictions until sufficient national information is available about pupils' attainment.
- The additional funding the school receives, to support pupils who start Year 7 with low literacy and numeracy skills, is not used consistently well. Some interventions have more impact than others. Leaders recognise that consistently improving progress for these pupils to catch up with their peers is a key priority for the school.
- The school's curriculum is broad and balanced and provides a wide range of subjects that meets the interests and ambitions of pupils. The range of subjects is constantly reviewed to ensure its appropriateness and value. Pupils have the opportunity to participate in many additional activities to broaden their experience. These opportunities include sports, and performing and creative arts.
- The local authority provided support and advice to the governors during the successful recruitment of the new executive headteacher. Involvement in this process provided evidence to the local authority that it should increase the level of resources allocated to the school. This planned support is welcomed by leaders and governors.

- Leaders track and monitor the allocation of additional funds they receive to support disadvantaged pupils. Actions and strategies are starting to have a marked positive impact on raising progress. For example, disadvantaged pupils' progress in English and mathematics currently compares favourably with that of other pupils nationally.
- The recently appointed executive headteacher has successfully created and shared his vision for the school with staff, parents and pupils. He has catalysed leaders at all levels to develop their skills and take the lead on their areas of responsibility. Staff are galvanised, energised and challenged to positively address those aspects of the school that require improvement.
- The executive headteacher has rapidly formed an accurate evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses. His realistic assessment of standards is based on a wide range of information. Other leaders have rightly adjusted their perceptions of the school's effectiveness to align with this evaluation. Clear plans are being created to address areas that require improvement.

Governance of the school

- Governors wholeheartedly share the executive headteacher's vision to provide high-quality teaching, learning and pastoral care, and improve outcomes for all pupils.
- Governors have not been able to effectively challenge the decline in the quality of provision at the school because they have not had the appropriate information to do so. For example, systems to hold teachers to account for the quality and impact of their work are not fully effective and progress information about current pupils contains inaccuracies.
- Governors are able to interpret and evaluate the clear information they now receive from the executive headteacher and other senior leaders. As a result, they have a realistic view of the school, and are aware of what needs to be done to improve it.
- A recent review of governance at the school has resulted in a restructuring of the work of committees and additional training for governors. The governing body is now in a more secure position to support and challenge leaders, and to monitor the impact of its work to improve the school's overall effectiveness.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- A clear culture of safeguarding exists within the school. Leaders ensure that all staff have received relevant and up-to-date training. Staff are knowledgeable about the risks that young people face. They know how to ensure that pupils are kept safe by using school policies and systems. As a result, staff can identify pupils who may be at risk and act swiftly where necessary.
- Pupils successfully learn how to keep themselves safe through the curriculum from staff and external speakers who visit the school. Pupils state that they feel safe when in school, and parents agree with this view.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is too variable, and is sometimes weak. Senior leaders know that there is work to do to reduce the inconsistencies that exist.
- Teachers often do not adapt learning strategies carefully enough to suit the needs of pupils. Pupils, such as those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, sometimes find their work too hard to do, which limits their achievements. Other pupils, particularly the most able, are provided with insufficient challenge, which slows their rates of progress.
- Teachers sometimes do not use questioning effectively enough to ensure that pupils make good progress. Questions can be superficial and addressed with short answers. As a result, opportunities are lost to explore and develop ideas. Many pupils are not in the habit of asking challenging questions of themselves and each other. Where learning is most effective, teachers use questioning to develop pupils' understanding and draw information from them. Teachers are able to clarify misconceptions and provide activities that confirm pupils' understanding.
- Teachers' feedback, too often, does not precisely identify how pupils' work can be improved. As a result, in some subjects pupils do not always know how to do better. In other instances, pupils are not given sufficient time to reflect and act on the feedback that they receive. However, some teachers demonstrate very effective practice. For example, in art and drama, pupils work on specific skills in order to improve the quality of their work. Parents comment on the variable impact that feedback has on progress.
- Not all teachers use ongoing assessment consistently to inform the next steps in lessons. Subsequently, learning tasks or the pace at which they are completed does not match what pupils need. When teachers, or pupils themselves, make judgements in lessons about how well pupils are doing, activities are closely targeted to pupils. For example, in a science lesson, an inspector observed pupils choosing which exam question to answer based on analysis of their previous work which highlighted strengths and weaknesses.
- Homework is set in accordance with the school's policy and helps to reinforce and consolidate learning. A high proportion of parents stated that their children receive appropriate homework tasks.
- Teachers have high expectations for pupils' use of relevant key terms which support the development of subject-specific vocabulary. Teachers use, and expect pupils to use, these terms in their explanations. Teachers provide activities that develop reading and writing in their lessons. For example, in English, pupils often complete longer written answers which are assessed using GCSE examination criteria.
- There are extremely strong relationships between adults and pupils and this creates a calm and purposeful learning environment in the classroom.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Opportunities to contribute to personal, social and health education and promote British values are carefully mapped and effectively delivered through enrichment days. Pupils are clear about how to keep themselves safe from risks in a range of different situations, including from extremist views. Pupils say that there are adults they can talk to if they are concerned about their welfare.
- Appropriate, individualised support is provided for pupils when required. Close links exist with agencies outside the school to ensure that the most suitable support is provided successfully at the right time.
- Pupils demonstrate high levels of respect and tolerance for each other. They are very clear about the unacceptability of abusive or discriminatory behaviour and, as a result, such incidents are very rare. Bullying is uncommon, and pupils state that, should it occur, they have confidence in adults at the school to address it successfully.
- A small number of pupils are educated away from the school site for part of the week. They benefit from following qualifications that meet their particular interests. As a result, they attend regularly and behave well.
- Pupils have good opportunities to participate in the life of the school. For example, some represent their peers on the student council, and older pupils have roles to contribute to keeping younger pupils safe. Although the views of pupils are sought in relation to specific aspects of the school, there is currently no regular process for them to contribute their individual views.
- Careers information, advice and guidance provide appropriate information to pupils from Year 7 onwards. Consequently, pupils can make informed decisions about their futures and so raise their aspirations. This provision is successful because a higher than national proportion of pupils moves successfully into further education, employment or training after leaving the school. However, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are successful in their destinations is lower than for other pupils. Older pupils told inspectors that they would have welcomed some of the advice they receive earlier on in their school careers.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Strong relationships exist between pupils and staff. Pupils listen carefully in lessons, and respond quickly to instructions and requests. Staff are very positive about the relationships that exist in the school.
- Pupils move around the building in a calm and orderly manner between lessons and are well supervised by staff. They are pleasant, polite and helpful to adults and each other. At lunchtime, inspectors observed more high-spirited, but not unpleasant, behaviour. Younger pupils state that they feel safe in all areas of the school.

- There is a culture of pride in the school. Pupils wear their uniforms smartly and correctly, and keep their school clean and tidy.
- Pupils enjoy school, and attendance is close to the national average. Disadvantaged pupils' absence remains slightly higher than the national average, although this is falling because of the positive impact of support. There are high rates of persistent absence among a small number of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, who have particular healthcare needs. The inclusive nature of the school is demonstrated by work to limit the impact of these interruptions to pupils' education as much as possible.
- The attendance of pupils who are educated at other locations for part of the week is closely monitored, and they attend well. Clear procedures exist to report any absences.
- Pupils are punctual when moving between classes, but a number of pupils arrive late to school at the start of the day. Although leaders ensure that appropriate sanctions are used, punctuality is not improving.
- Rates of exclusion of pupils at the school have been historically low and permanent exclusions from the school are very rare, and used as a last resort. However, exclusions increased last year, despite targeted interventions and support for certain pupils. Currently, leaders do not have coherent systems to monitor the range of information they collect on pupils' behaviour. As a result, they cannot evaluate the impact of strategies to improve behaviour, or ensure that school policies regarding behaviour are being applied consistently around the school.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Recently, pupils' outcomes have been similar to those of other pupils nationally. However, in 2016, pupils' rates of progress across a range of subjects were lower. Furthermore, progress has been too variable for different groups of pupils and in different subjects. Too many pupils have not been able to build sufficiently on their above-average standards when they started at this school.
- Pupils with different starting points make different rates of progress. For example, in 2016, most-able Year 11 pupils' progress was one third of a grade below that of all pupils nationally. Pupils with low prior attainment made, on average, three quarters of a grade less progress. Leaders' analysis suggests that lower rates of progress for the most-able persist for current pupils. However, low prior attaining pupils' progress is now closer to expectations, particularly as many more of these pupils are now taking appropriate qualifications in key stage 4.
- Year 11 pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities made, on average, almost a grade less progress than other pupils in 2016. Leaders' analysis shows this trend continues for current cohorts.
- Pupils' progress in humanities, mathematics and modern foreign languages has consistently been stronger than in English and science. The differences between mathematics and English look set to diminish for those pupils currently in Year 11, but less so for most-able pupils.

- The small number of pupils who complete part of their education at different locations are generally achieving well. They make progress towards qualifications that, mostly, prepare them well for the next stage of their education. However, one qualification that is available currently limits pupils' achievement to a lower GCSE grade. Leaders have plans to change this.
- Disadvantaged pupils are making similar, and in some cases better, progress than other pupils in most year groups and nationally. The differences that previously existed have disappeared. For example, in 2016, Year 11 disadvantaged pupils made almost a grade less progress, compared with other pupils nationally.
- Leaders are able to demonstrate that boys and girls make similar progress. Differences that have existed have been addressed in most subjects. Boys have previously made less progress than girls. For example, in 2016, Year 11 boys made on average half a grade less progress than girls.
- Pupils' attainment overall is consistently high. For example, it has been much higher than nationally in English and mathematics, and across a range of subjects. The proportion of pupils who achieve the English Baccalaureate has been higher than the national figure. However, this has not been the case for disadvantaged pupils.

School details

Unique reference number	103854
Local authority	Dudley
Inspection number	10025356

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,016
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Graham Knowles
Executive headteacher	James Bowkett
Telephone number	01384 816165
Website	www.summerhill.dudley.sch.uk
Email address	info@summerhill.dudley.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	29–30 November 2012

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school is of average size for a secondary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium is lower than average.
- The vast majority of pupils are White British and other pupils come from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds.
- A below-average proportion of pupils have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities supported by the school is below average.

- A small number of key stage 4 pupils access part of their education at either Stourbridge College or Halesowen College.
- The school met the government's floor standards, which set the minimum targets for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 11, in 2015. This information is not yet available for the 2016 cohort because progress information for Year 11 has not yet been validated.
- The previous headteacher retired in summer 2016 and an executive headteacher was appointed to lead the school in October 2016. During the period of transition, an interim headteacher has been in place.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in 33 lessons, two of which observations were carried out with a member of the school's senior leadership team. Lessons covered a wide range of subjects and year groups. An inspector visited a tutorial session. Pupils' behaviour in lessons and at social times was also evaluated by inspectors.
- Pupils' work was reviewed by inspectors in lessons.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior and middle leaders, including those with responsibility for safeguarding, with teachers, and four members of the governing body. An inspector also met with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors analysed the 143 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. Inspectors also took account of the views of 63 members of staff through online inspection questionnaire responses.
- Pupils met formally with inspectors on two separate occasions. Inspectors also conducted many informal discussions with pupils.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of school documentation, including information about self-evaluation and action plans, outcomes, teaching and behaviour, and minutes of governing body meetings.

Inspection team

Rob Hackfath, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Bernice Astling	Ofsted Inspector
Graham Tyrer	Ofsted Inspector
Elizabeth Ellis-Martin	Ofsted Inspector
David Hughes	Ofsted Inspector
Herminder Channa	Ofsted Inspector

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